

SOME EXPERIENCES OF A NEW GUINEA
RESIDENT MAGISTRATE
FIRST SERIES

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PREFACE

It appears to be the custom, for writers of books of this description, to begin with apologies as to their style, or excuses for their production. I pretend no style; but have simply written at the request of my wife, for her information and that of my personal friends, an account of my life and work in New Guinea. To the few "men that know" who still survive, in one or two places gaps or omissions may appear to occur; these omissions are intentional, as I have no wish to cause pain to broken men who are still living, nor to distress the relations of those who are dead. Much history is better written fifty years after all concerned in the making are dead. Governor or ruffian, Bishop or cannibal, I have written of all as I found them; I freely confess that I think when the last muster comes, the Great Architect will find—as I trust my readers will—some good points in the ruffians and the cannibals, as well, possibly, as some vulnerable places in the armour of Governors and Bishops.

I do not pretend that this book possesses any scientific value; such geographical, zoological, and scientific work as I have done is dealt with in various journals; but it does picture correctly the life of a colonial officer in the one-time furthest outpost of the Empire—men of whose lives and work the average Briton knows nothing.

Conditions in New Guinea have altered; where one of Sir William MacGregor's officers stood alone, there

PREFACE

now rest a number of Australian officials and clerks. Much credit is now annually given to this host; some little, I think, might be fairly allotted to the dead Moreton, Armit, Green, Kowold, De Lange, and the rest of the gallant gentlemen who gave their lives to win one more country for the flag and to secure the Pax Britannica to yet another people.

I have abstained from putting into the mouths of natives the ridiculous jargon or "pidgin English" in which they are popularly supposed to converse. The old style of New Guinea officer spoke Motuan to his men, and I have, where required, merely given a free translation from that language into English. In recent books about New Guinea, written by men of whom I never heard whilst there, I have noticed sentences in pidgin English, supposed to have been spoken by natives, which I would defy any European or native in New Guinea, in my time, either to make sense of or interpret.

When the history of New Guinea comes to be written, I think it will be found that the names of several people stand out from the others in brilliant prominence; amongst its Governors, Sir William MacGregor; its Judges, that of Sir Francis Winter; its Missions, that of the Right Rev. John Montagu Stone-Wigg, first Anglican Bishop; and in the development of its natural resources, that of the pioneer commercial firm of Burns, Philp and Company.

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CHAPTER I

IN the year 1895 I found myself at Cooktown in Queensland, aged 23, accompanied by a fellow adventurer, F. H. Sylvester, and armed with £100, an outfit particularly unsuited to the tropics, and a letter of introduction from the then Governor of New Zealand, the Earl of Glasgow, to the Lieutenant-Governor of British New Guinea, Sir William MacGregor.

After two or three weeks of waiting, we took passage by the mail schooner *Myrtle*, 150 tons, one of two schooners owned by Messrs. Burns, Philp and Co., Sydney, and subsidized by the British New Guinea Government to carry monthly mails to that possession in fact they were then the only means of communication between New Guinea and the rest of the world. These two vessels, after a chequered career in the South Seas, as slavers—then euphoniously termed Australia “labour” vessels—had, by the lapse of time and purchase by a firm of high repute and keen commercial ambition, now been promoted to the dignity of carrying H.M. Mails, Government stores for the Administration of New Guinea, and supplies to the branches of the firm at Samarai and Port Moresby and were, under the energetic superintendence of the respective masters, Steel and Inman, extending the commercial interests of their owners throughout both the British and

her was a coal hulk in a Queensland port. And good old Scotch firm of trade grabbers that owned them, sending their ships, in spite of any risk, wherever a possible bawbee was to be made, and taking their hundred per cent. of profit with the same dour front they took their frequently trebled loss. Mopping up the German trade until the day came when the heavily subsidized ships of the Nord Deutscher Lloyd drove them out; as well they might, for in one scale hung the efforts of a small company of British merchants, unassisted as ever by its country or Government, the other, a practically Imperial Company backed by the resources of a vast Empire.

But to return to the *Myrtle*, then lying in the bay off the mouth of the Endeavour River, to which we were ferried in one of her own boats, perched on the top of hen coops filled with screeching poultry, several protesting pigs, and two goats; all mixed up with a belated mail bag, parcels sent by local residents to friends in New Guinea, and three hot and particularly cross seamen. The goats we learnt later were destined to serve as mutton for the Government House table; the pigs and hens were a little private venture of the ship's cook, these being intended for barter with natives.

On our arrival at the ship's side, we were promptly boosted up a most elusive rope ladder by the seamen who had ferried us across, the schooner meanwhile rolling in a nasty cross sea and raising the devil's own din with her flapping sails. Tumbled over the bulwarks on to the deck, we were seized upon by a violent little man in a frantic state of excitement, perspiration, and bad language, and ten seconds later found ourselves helping him to haul on the tackles of the boat that brought us, which was then being hoisted in, pigs, goats, luggage, etc., holus bolus; this operation completed, our violent little man introduced himself as Mr. Wisdell,

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the ship's cook, and volunteered to show us to our berths, after which, as soon as the bustle of getting under way was over, he stated his intention of formally introducing us to the captain.

Just as we were somewhat dismally becoming quite assured that our imaginations were not deceiving us as to the number of beetles and cockroaches a berth of most attenuated size could contain, also beginning to find that the motions of a schooner of 150 tons were decidedly upsetting to our stomachs, after those of big vessels, Mr. Wisdell returned and, diving into a locker, produced a bottle of whisky, some sodawater, and four tumblers. Three of the latter he placed with the other materials in the fiddle of the cabin's table, the remaining tumbler he held behind his back. Then politely bowing to us, Mr. Wisdell signed that we were to precede him up the companion way on to the poop, where a red-faced, cheery-looking little man, clothed in immaculate white ducks, gazed fixedly at the sails or at the man at the wheel, a regard that the helmsman looked as if he would willingly have done without. To him Mr. Wisdell marched, and then "Mr. Sylvester—Captain Inman—Captain Inman—Mr. Monckton—etc." Never did Clapham dancing master receive the bows of his class with greater dignity and grace, than did Captain Inman receive those which, modelling our deportment on that of Mr. Wisdell, we made him.

Then Mr. Wisdell, still carrying the tumbler behind his back, spake thus: "Perhaps, Captain Inman, you would like to offer the gentlemen a little something in the cabin?" Captain Inman unbent: "Billy, the mate has the blasted fever; send the bo'sun." Upon the appearance of . . . his having apparently taken over the man at the wh

Inman led the way to the cabin, where Mr. Wisdell, kindly placing a glass in each of our hands, drew attention to the bottle and, with deprecating little coughs directed towards his commander, modestly backed away. Captain Inman, however, was well versed in the etiquette the occasion demanded and rose to it. "What, Billy, only three glasses! We want another!" Out shot Mr. Wisdell's glass from behind his back and the occasion was complete.

Two days of violent sea-sickness then intervened, the misery of which was broken only by the visits of Mr. Wisdell, or as better acquaintance now permitted us to call him, "Billy," bearing "mutton" broth prepared from goat. These animals, by the way, appear to be indigenous to the streets of Cooktown and to frequent them in large herds; their sustenance seems to be gleaned from the rubbish heaps and back yards; for of grass, at the time I was there, there was none, and their camping places were for choice the door-steps and verandahs of the hotels, from which vantage points, at frequent intervals, the slumbers of the lodgers were cheered by the sound of violent strife, and sweetened by the peculiar fragrance diffused by ancient goats.

Then came one fine and memorable morning when our cheerful little skipper called us to look at Samarai, at that time called by the hideous name of Dinner Island, towards the anchorage of which we were slowly moving, the while, from every direction, a swarm of canoes paddled furiously towards us, crowded with fuzzy-headed natives, all eager to earn a few sticks of tobacco, by assisting in the discharge of the cargo we carried. The canoes were warned off pending the arrival of a health officer to grant pratique, and that official soon appeared in the person of Mr. R. E. Armit, a well-set-up, soldierly-looking man of about

fifty years of age. Poor Armit, long since killed by the deadly malaria of the Northern Division.

Mr. Armit was Subcollector of Customs and goodness knows what else at Samarai, and was himself an extraordinary personality. An accomplished linguist, widely read and travelled, I never found a subject about which Armit did not know something and usually a very great deal. He, however, did not possess a faculty for making or retaining money, and did possess a particularly caustic tongue and pen, which, when the mood took him, he would exercise even upon his superior officers; hence he was frequently in hot water and never lacked enemies.

Samarai boasted neither wharf nor jetty; our cargo was therefore simply shot over the side into the multitude of canoes and thence ferried to the beach, with such assistance as the ship's boats could afford.

Dinner Island, or as I shall from now on term it, Samarai, is an island of about fifty acres. The hill, which forms the centre of the island, rises from what was then a malodorous swamp, surrounded by a strip of coral beach. The whole island was a gazetted penal district, and the town consisted of the Residency, a fine roomy bungalow built by the Imperial Government for the then Commissioner, General Sir Peter Scratchley—the first of New Guinea officials to be claimed by malaria—and now the headquarters of the Resident Magistrate for the Eastern Division; a small three-roomed building of native grass and round poles, dubbed the Subcollector's house; a gaol of native material, the roof of which served as a bond store for dutiable goods, and a cemetery: the three latter appeared to be well filled. There was also a small single-roomed galvanized iron building which served as a custom-

parentage, and was at the time awaiting his trial for murder. Two small stores, the one owned by Burns, Philp and Co., of Sydney, and the other by Mr. William Whitten, now the Honble. William Whitten, M.L.C., completed the main buildings.

Mr. Whitten was the son of a Queen's Messenger, since dead of malaria, and possessed an adventurous disposition which had taken him off to sea as a boy. His first appearance in New Guinea was as one of the personal guard of Sir Peter Scratchley, a body which Sir William MacGregor replaced with his fine native constabulary. Whitten had saved money enough to purchase a small cutter, with which he had begun trading for *bêche-de-mer* in the Trobriand Islands. While dealing with the natives for that commodity, he had discovered that pearls of a fair quality existed in a small oyster forming one of the staple foods of the natives. Whitten purchased large quantities of the pearls from the natives for almost nothing, and had he only been able to keep his discovery to himself, would have had fortune in his grasp. Unfortunately for him, the sale of his prize in Australia brought down upon him a host of other competitors, and the natives having discovered that the white man was keenly desirous of obtaining what were to them worthless stones, raised their prices higher and higher until there was little to be gained in the trade.

Whitten, however, had made enough to bring a young brother from England, purchase a bigger and better vessel, also a large quantity of merchandise. At the date of writing, Whitten Brothers own numerous plantations, several steamers and sailing vessels, conduct a banking business, have branches in the gold-fields, and are the largest employers of labour in the country; in 1895, however, this greatness was as yet undreamt of by them.

Other than the Residency and the glorified sardine box doing duty as the Custom House, the only other building in Samarai formed of European materials—by which I mean sawn timber and fastened with nails—was the bungalow occupied by Burns, Philp's manager, and situated on perhaps the best site there. Gangs of prisoners—native—were engaged quarrying in the hill of Samarai and filling up the swamp, a palpably necessary work. Curiously enough in a pleasantly written little book by Colonel Kenneth Mackay, C.B., entitled *Across Papua*, I noticed a reference to this work, which was ultimately the means of stamping malaria out of the place. The author attributed it, amongst others, to Doctor Jones, a health officer who came to New Guinea in recent years. This statement is quite incorrect; the credit of banishing malaria from Samarai belongs to Sir William MacGregor, and to him alone.

A few sheds, occupied by boat-builders and carpenters, scattered along the beach, complete the buildings of Samarai. Of hotels and accommodation houses there were none, but then there was no travelling public to accommodate; gold-diggers to and from the islands of Sudest and St. Aignan camped in their tents, which as a rule consisted of a single sheet of calico stretched over a pole; traders lived in their vessels. Alcoholic refreshment was dispensed at the stores; Burns, Philp's manager, for instance, or one of the Whittens, ceasing from their book-keeping labours to serve thirsty customers with lager beer or more potent fluids over the store counter. Whitten Brothers had a large roofed balcony with no sides, situated at the back of the store, and here at night, as to a general club-house, foregathered all the Europeans of the island. Under a centre table was placed a supply of varied drinks, and as men came in and bottles were

emptied, they were hurled over the edge on to the soft coral sand. In the morning one of the Whittens caused the bottles to be collected by a native boy, counted them, and avoided the trouble of book-keeping by the simple method of dividing the sum-total of bottles by the number of men he knew, or that his boy told him, had visited the "house"; each man, therefore, whether a thirsty person or not, was charged exactly the same as his neighbour.

All Samarai was planted with cocoanut palms, the dodging of falling nuts from which, in windy weather, served to keep the inhabitants spry. Pyjamas were the almost universal wear, varied in the case of some traders by a strip of turkey-red twill, worn petticoat fashion, and a cotton vest.

Among the traders were two picturesque ruffians, alike in nothing, save the ability with which they conducted their business and dodged hanging. Each had spent his life trading in the South Seas and had amassed a fair fortune. Of them and their exploits I have heard endless yarns. Of one of these men, who was known far and wide through the South Seas as "Nicholas the Greek"—Heaven knows why, for his real name sounded English, and his reckless courage was certainly not typical of the modern Greek—the following stories are told.

A vessel had been cut out in one of the New Guinea or Louisade Islands—which it was I have forgotten—and the crew massacred. When this became known, a man-of-war or Government ship was sent to punish the murderers, and in especial to secure a native chief, who was primarily responsible. The punitive ship came across Nicholas and engaged him as pilot and interpreter, he being offered one hundred pounds when the man wanted was secured. Nicholas safely piloted his charge to some remote island where the

inhabitants, doubtless having guilty consciences, promptly fled for the hills, where it was impossible for ordinary Europeans to follow them. He then offered to go alone to try and locate them, and, armed with a ship's cutlass and revolver, disappeared on his quest. Some days elapsed, then in the night a small canoe appeared alongside the ship, from which emerged Nicholas, bearing in his hand a bundle. Marching up to the officer commanding, he undid it, and rolled at the officer's feet a gory human head, remarking, "Here is your man, I couldn't bring the lot of him. I'll thank you for that hundred."

Another story was that Nicholas on one occasion was attacked and frightfully slashed about by his native crew and then thrown overboard, he shamming dead. Sinking in the water he managed to get under the keel, along which he crawled like a crawfish until he came to the rudder, upon which he roosted under the counter until night fell and his crew slept. Then he climbed on board, secured a tomahawk, and either killed or drove overboard the whole crew, they thinking he was an avenging ghost. This done, badly wounded and unassisted, he worked his vessel to a neighbouring island, where, being sickened and disgusted with men, he shipped and trained a crew of native women, with whom he sailed for many years; in fact, I think, until the day came when Sir W. MacGregor appeared upon the scene and passed the Native Labour Ordinance, which, amongst other things, prohibited the carrying of women on vessels.

Of Nicholas also is told the story that once, in the bad old pre-protectorate days, so many charges were brought against him by missionaries and merchantmen that a man-of-war was sent to find him. He was found, and being a trader, got wi

for, and accordingly laid his plans for the bamboozlement of his would-be captors. Summoning his crew, he informed them that his father was dead, and that, as he had his father's name of Nicholas, his name must now be "Peter," as the custom of his tribe was, even as that of some New Guinea peoples, viz. not to mention the name of the dead lest harm befall. Then he sailed in search of the pursuing warship and, eventually finding her, went on board and volunteered his services as pilot, which were gladly accepted. To all of his haunts he then guided that ship, but in all the reply of the native was the same, when questioned as to his whereabouts, "We know not Nicholas, he is gone. Peter your pilot comes in his place. Nicholas is dead, and 'tis wrong to mention the name of the dead." It was said of him that on no part of his body could a man's hand be placed without touching the scar of some old wound—a story I can fully believe.

The second of this interesting couple was known as "German Harry," a man of insignificant appearance and little physical strength, but the most venomous little scorpion, when thoroughly roused, it has ever been my lot to meet; at the same time he was the most generous-hearted little man towards the hard up and unfortunate. He had also spent a considerable portion of his time in dodging arrest or explaining certain alleged manslaughters of his before various tribunals. I remember one little specimen I witnessed of Harry's fighting methods, and from that understood why the biggest of bullies and "hard cases" treated him with respect.

A vessel, owned and commanded by a hulking brute of a Dane, had come over from Queensland bringing, amongst other things, some recent papers, one of which contained an account of a disgraceful wife-beating case, in which the Dane figured and in which he had

scaped—as such brutes generally do in civilized countries—by the payment of a miserable fine.

As Harry, the Dane and I, were sitting in a gold-
 ld store, Harry read the account, and then gazing
 the Dane, said something in German, of which
 "Schweinhund" was the only word I understood. A
 ss of rum promptly smashed on Harry's teeth,
 lowed by a bellow of rage and the thrower's rush.
 rry in a single instant became a lunatic, and flying
 e a wild cat at the other's face, kicking, biting, and
 wing, bore the big man to the ground, from where,
 a few seconds, agonized yells of, "He is eating me,"
 d us the Dane was in dire trouble. Harry was
 agged away by main force, and we found half his
 tim's nose bitten off, while a bloodshot and pro-
 ding eye showed how nearly his thumb had got its
 rk in. The wife-beater went off a mass of funk
 d misery, while Harry proceeded calmly to attend
 the glass cuts on his face. "You are a nice cheerful
 t of little hyena," I remarked to Harry afterwards.
 What sort of fighting do you call that?" "That?
 , that's nothing. I only wanted to frighten him
 I would have had his eye out as well. He won't
 row a glass at German Harry again in a hurry."
 Some years later I met German Harry in a Sydney
 eet, and though I had long since thought I was
 yond being surprised at anything he did, he yet gave
 e a further shock when he told me he had purchased
 "Matrimonial Agency"

CHAPTER II

THE day following our arrival in Samarai, loud yells of "Sail Ho!" from every native in the island announced that the *Merrie England* was returning from the Mambare River, where the Lieut.-Governor had been occupied in punishing the native murderers of a man named Clarke, the leader of a prospecting party in search of gold; and in establishing at that point, for the protection of future prospectors, a police post under the gallant but ill-fated John Green. Clarke's murder was destined, though no one realized it at the time, to be the beginning of a long period of bloodshed and anarchy in the Northern Division—then still a portion of the Eastern Division. These events, however, belong to a later date and chapter.

On her voyage south from the Mambare, the *Merrie England* had waited at the mouth of the Musa River, while Sir William MacGregor traversed and mapped that stream. Whilst so engaged, accompanied by but one officer and a single boat's crew of native police, His Excellency discovered a war party of north-east coast natives returning from a cannibal feast, with their canoes loaded with dismembered human bodies. Descending the river, Sir William collected his native police and, attacking the raiders, dealt out condign and summary justice, which resulted in the tribes of the lower Musa dwelling for many a year in a security to which several generations had been strangers.

Some little time after the ship had cast anchor, my friend and myself received a message that Sir William

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was disengaged; whereupon we went on board to see for the first time, the strongest man it has ever known, any fate to look upon. Short, square, slightly peaked with a strong Scotch accent, showing signs of overwork and the ravages of malaria, there was nothing in the first appearance of the man to suggest him as being out of the ordinary, but I had not been three minutes in his cabin before I realized that I was in the presence of a master of men—a Cromwell, a Drake, a Caesar or Napoleon—his keen grey eyes were looking clean through me, and knew that I was being summed and weighed. Once, and only once in my life, have I felt that a man was my master in every respect, a person to be blindly obeyed and one who might be right and infallible, and that was when I met Sir William MacGregor.

Years afterwards, in conversation with a man who had held high command, who had distinguished himself and been much decorated for services in Britain's wars, I described the impression that MacGregor made upon me, the sort of overwhelming sense of inferiority he, unconsciously to himself, made on me, and was told that my friend had experienced the same impression when meeting Cecil Rhodes.

The story of how Sir William MacGregor came to be appointed on New Guinea was to me rather an interesting one, as showing the result, in the history of a country, of a fortunate accident. It was related to me by Bishop Stone-Wigg, to whom it had been told by the man responsible for the appointment, Sir Samuel Griffiths, Sir Hugh Nelson, or Sir Thomas McIlwraith, which of the three I have now forgotten. Sir William, at the time Doctor MacGregor was attending, as the representative of Fiji, one of the earlier conferences regarding the proposed Federation of Australasia; he had already made his mark by

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performed in connection with the suppression of the revolt among the hill tribes of that Crown Colony. At the conference, amongst other questions, New Guinea came up for discussion, whereupon MacGregor remarked: "There is the last country remaining, in which the Englishman can show what can be done by just native policy." The remark struck the attention of one of the delegates, by whom the mental note was made, "If Queensland ever has a say in the affairs of New Guinea, and I have a say in the affairs of Queensland, you shall be the man for New Guinea." When, later, New Guinea was declared a British Possession, Queensland had a very large say in the matter, and the man who had made the mental note happening to be Premier, he caused the appointment of Administrator to be offered to MacGregor, by whom it was accepted.

Of Sir William, a story told me by himself will illustrate his determination of character, even at an early age, though not related with that intention.

MacGregor, when completing his training at a Scotch University, found his money becoming exhausted; no time could he spare from his studies in which to earn any, even were the opportunity there. Something had to be done, so MacGregor called his old Scotch landlady into consultation as to ways and means. "Well, Mr. MacGregor, how much a week can you find?" "Half a crown." "Well, I can do it for that." And this is how she did it. MacGregor had a bowl of porridge for breakfast, nothing else; two fresh herrings or one red one, the cost of the fresh ones being identical with the cured one, for dinner; and a bowl of porridge again for supper. Thus he completed his course and took the gold medal of his year.

This thoroughness and grim determination MacGregor still carried into his work; for instance, it was

necessary for him, unless he was prepared to have a trained surveyor always with him on his expeditions, to have a knowledge of astronomy and surveying. This he took up with his usual vigour, and I once witnessed a little incident which showed, not only how perfect Sir William had made himself in the subject, but also his unbounded confidence in himself. We were lying off a small island about which a doubt existed as to whether it was within the waters of Queensland or New Guinea. The commander of the *Merric England*, together with the navigating officer, took a set of stellar observations; the chief Government surveyor, together with an assistant surveyor, took a second set; and Sir William took a third. The ship's party and the surveyors arrived at one result, Sir William at a slightly different one; an ordinary man would have decided that four highly competent professional men must be right and he wrong; not so, however, MacGregor. "Ye are both wrong," was his remark, when their results were handed to him by the commander and surveyor. They demurred, pointing out that their observations tallied. "Do it again, ye don't agree with mine"; and sure enough Sir William proved right and they wrong.

My part in this had been to hold a bull's-eye lantern for Sir William to the arc of his theodolite, and to endeavour to attain the immobility of a bronze statue while being devoured by gnats and mosquitoes. Therefore later I sought Stuart Russell, the chief surveyor, with the intention of working off a little of the irritation of the bites by japing at him. "What sort of surveyors do you and Commander Curtis think yourselves? Got to have a bally amateur to help you, eh?" "Shut up, Monckton," said Stuart Russell, "we are surveyors of ordinary ability, Sir William is of more than that."

The same sort of thing occurred with Sir William in languages; he spoke Italian to Giulianetti, poor Giulianetti later murdered at Mekeo; German to Kowold, poor Kowold, too, later killed by a dynamite explosion on the Musa River; and French to the members of the Sacred Heart Mission. I believe if a Russian or a Japanese had turned up, Sir William would have addressed him in his own language. Ross-Johnston, at one time private secretary to Sir William, once wailed to me about the standard of erudition Sir William expected in a man's knowledge of a foreign language. Ross-Johnston had been educated in Germany and knew German, as he thought, as well as his own mother tongue. Sir William, while reading some abstruse German book, struck a passage the meaning of which was to him somewhat obscure; he referred to Ross-Johnston, who, far from being able to explain the passage, could not make sense of the chapter. Whereupon Sir William remarked that he thought Ross-Johnston professed to know German. Ross-Johnston, feeling somewhat injured, took the book to Kowold, who was a German. Kowold gave one look at it, then exclaimed, "Phew! I can't understand that, it's written by a scientist for scientists!"

One little story about MacGregor, a story I have always loved, was that on one occasion while sitting in Legislative Council, some member, bolder than usual, asked, "What happens, your Excellency, should Council differ with your views?" "Man," replied Sir William, "the result would be the same." But I digress, as Bullen remarks, and shall return from stories about MacGregor to his cabin and my own affairs.

Sir William told my friend and myself, that for two reasons he could not offer either of us employment in his service. Firstly, that the amount of money at his disposal, £12,000 per annum, did not permit of fresh

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pointments until vacancies occurred; secondly, that
officers must be conversant with native customs
and ways of thought, which experience we were entirely
lacking. His Excellency, however, told us that he
had just received word of the discovery of gold upon
Goodlark Island, to which place the ship would
soon proceed, and that we might go in her; an offer
readily accepted.

Then for the first time I met Mr. F. P. Winter.
Afterwards Sir Francis Winter, Chief Magistrate of the
possession; the Hon. M. H. Moreton, Resident Magistrate
of the Eastern Division; Cameron, Chief Government
Surveyor; Mervyn Jones, Commander of the
Terrie England; and Meredith, head gaoler.

Winter had been a law officer in the service of Fiji
and upon the appointment of Sir William MacGregor
to New Guinea, had been chosen by him as his Chief
Justice and general right-hand man; the wisdom of
which choice later years amply showed. Widely read
and profound thinker, possessed of a singular charm of
manner, simple and unaffected to a degree, Winter
was a man that fascinated every one with whom he
came in contact. I don't think he ever said an unkind
word or did a mean action in his life. Every officer
in the Service, then and later, took his troubles
to him, and every unfortunate out of the Service appeal
to his purse.

Moreton, a younger brother of the present Earl
Ducie, had begun life in the Seaforth Highlands
plucky, hard-working, and the best of good fellows.
He was fated to work on in New Guinea till, with
constitution shattered, an Australian Governor
chucked him out to make room for a younger man.
Shortly after which he died.

Cameron, the surveyor, was another good man
wholly wrapped up in his work. Of Cameron it

said, that he imagined that surveyors were not for the purpose of surveying the earth, but that the earth was created solely for them to survey. He, good chap, was luckier than Moreton, for his fate was to die in harness; he being found sitting dead in his chair, pen in hand, with a half-written dispatch in front of him.

Mervyn Jones was a particularly smart seaman and navigator; educated at Eton for other things, the sea had, however, exercised an irresistible fascination for him; being too old for the Navy, he had worked up into the Naval Reserve through the Merchant Service, and thus had come out to command the *Merrie England*. The charts of the Coral Sea owe much to his labour, and to that also of his two officers, Rothwell and Taylor. All these officers were destined later to share a more or less common fate: Jones died of a combination of lungs and malaria, Taylor of malaria at sea, whilst Rothwell was invalided out of the Service. Meredith was taking a gang of native convicts down to Sudest Island; they had been lent by the New Guinea Government to assist in making a road to a gold reef discovered there which was now being opened by an Australian company. It was here that he and many of his charges left their bones.

Not far from Sudest lies Rossel Island, a wooded hilly land, inhabited by a small dark-skinned people differing in language and customs from all other Papuans. Personally I do not believe they have any affinity with Papuans, either by descent or in other ways, whatever views ethnologists may hold. The Rossel Islanders have among their songs several Chinese chants, the origin of which is explained in this way. In September, 1858, the ship *St. Paul*, bound from China to the Australian gold-fields, and carrying some three hundred Chinese coolies, was wrecked on an outlying sandbank of Rossel. The European officers

and crew took to the boats and made their way to Queensland, the Chinamen being left to shift for themselves. Thus abandoned to their fate, the Chinamen were discovered by the islanders, and were by them liberally supplied with food and water; when well fattened they were removed in canoes to the main island, in lots of five and ten, and there killed and eaten. The Chinamen, when removed, were under the impression that they were merely taken in small numbers as the native canoes could only carry a few passengers at a time, being ignorant of the distance of the sea journey. As they left their awful sandbank in the canoes, they sang pæans and chants of joy, which the quick-eared natives picked up and incorporated in their songs. In 1859 but one solitary Chinaman remained of the three hundred, and he, fortunate man, was taken off Rossel by a passing French steamer and landed in Australia, where history or scandal says he later pursued the occupation of sly grog seller at a Victorian gold rush, and being convicted thereof, was later pardoned in consideration of his sufferings and being the sole survivor of three hundred.

From Sudest the *Merrie England* went on to Woodlark Island, from whence the discovery of gold had been reported by a couple of traders, Lobb and Ede. These two men were a very good example of the old gold-field's practice of "dividing mates." Lobb was professional gold or other mineral prospector, who had sought for gold in any land where it was likely to occur; when successful, his gains, however great, soon slipped away; when unsuccessful, he depended on a "mate" to finance and feed him, in diggers' language, "grub stake" him, until such time as his unerring instinct should again locate a fresh find. Ede was a New Guinea trader owning a cocoanut plantation on the Laughlan Isles, together with a small vessel. Ede landed Lobb on

Woodlark with a number of reliable natives, and, keeping him going with tools, provisions, etc., at last had his reward by word from Lobb of the discovery of payable gold. Thereupon they had reported their discovery and applied for a reward claim to the Administration, together with the request that the island should be proclaimed a gold-field; and at the same time had informed their trader friends, some twenty in all, of what was to be gained at the island.

Lobb and Ede, with their twenty friends, formed the European population of the island when the *Merrie England* arrived there; with the exception of Lobb, there was not an experienced miner in the lot. The twenty were a curious collection of men: an ex-Captain in Les Chasseurs D'Afrique, whom later on I got to know very well, but who, poor chap, was always most unjustly suspected by the diggers of being an escapee from the French convict establishment at New Caledonia, merely because he was a Frenchman; an unfrocked priest, who, by the way, was a most plausible and finished scoundrel; and the son of the Premier of one of the Australian colonies; these now, with Ede and myself, constitute the sole survivors of the men who heard Sir William declare the island a gold-field. Here it was that an ex-British resident, and the son of a famous Irish Churchman, jostled shoulders with men whose real names were only known to the police in the various countries from which they hailed. "Jimmy from Heaven," an angelic person, who was once sentenced to be hanged for murder and, the rope breaking, gained a reprieve and pardon, hence his sobriquet; "Greasy Bill"; "Bill the Boozer"; "French Pete"; and "The Dove," a most truculent scoundrel; the names they answered to sufficiently explain the men.

All nationalities and all shades of character, from

good to damned bad, they however all held two virtues in common: a dauntless courage and a large charity to the unfortunate; traits which will perhaps stand them in better stead in the bourne to which they have gone than they did in New Guinea.

CHAPTER III

SOME six months I put in at Woodlark Island, acquiring during that time a fine strong brand of malaria, a crop of boils, which had spread like wild-fire among the mining camps, catching Europeans and natives alike, a little gold, and a large amount of experience; all of which were most painfully acquired.

Sylvester, after having suffered some particularly malignant bouts of malaria and having developed some corroding and fast-spreading mangrove ulcers, parted company with me and went to New Zealand. The mangrove ulcer, commonly called New Guinea sore, is, I think, quite the most beastly thing one has to contend with on those islands; it is mainly caused, in the first instance, by leech or mosquito bites setting up an irritation which causes the victim to scratch; then the poisonous mud of either mangrove or pandanus swamps gets into the abrasion, and an indolent ulcer is set up, which slowly but perceptibly spreads, as well as eating inward to the bone, for which I know no remedy other than a change to a temperate climate. Painful when touched during the day, it is agony itself when the legs stiffen at night.

The method of obtaining gold, at the time I was at Woodlark Island, was primitive and simple in the extreme, and was performed in this way. Having located a stream, gully or ravine, in which a "prospect" could be found to the "dish," the "prospect" consisting of one or more grains of gold, the "dish" holding approximately thirty pounds weight of wash dirt, i.e.

gold-bearing gravel, the miner—or digger, as he is more generally called—pegged out a claim of some fifty feet square. When he had done this he put in a small dam, to the overflow of which he attached a wooden box some six feet long by twelve inches wide, having a fall of one inch to the foot, and paved with other flat stones or plaited vines. Into the head of this box was then thrown the wash dirt, from which the action of the water washed away the stones, sand, etc., leaving the gold precipitated at the bottom. The larger the flow of water, the more dirt could be put through, and the more dirt the more gold.

The title to a claim consisted of a document called a "Miner's Right," which permitted the holder to peg out and keep the above area, or as many more of similar dimensions as he chose to occupy or man. A miner's right cost ten shillings per annum and *ipso facto* constituted the holder a miner—sex, infancy, or nationality notwithstanding, the only ineligibles being Chinese. "Manning ground" consisted of placing a person holding a miner's right in occupation thereof, the wages that person received being immaterial. Thus a man employing ten or a dozen Papuans, at wages ranging from five to ten shillings a month, could, by merely paying ten shillings per annum per head for miner's rights, monopolize ten or a dozen claims. The wages of the European miner ranged from twenty shillings a day and upwards, this, of course, being the man contemplated by the Queensland Mining Act, and adopted by New Guinea, as the person likely to man and work ground held by the miner holding ground in excess of that to which his own "right" entitled him.

In theory, it is of course manifestly unfair, that the native of a country should be classed as an alien, and debarred from any privilege conferred by law upon Europeans; but in practice, the granting of miner's

rights to them merely means that the European able to employ a number of natives can monopolize claims, to the exclusion of other Europeans. The native gets no more wages for his privilege of holding ground, and were the privilege withdrawn would still obtain exactly the employment he gets now, as his labour in working the claims is necessary and profitable to his employer, and the supply of native labour for the miner is never equal to the demand.

An interesting feature in connection with gold-mining on Woodlark Island was that frequently the gold-bearing gravel ran under old coral reefs, thus showing plainly that the whole gold-field had once been submerged under the sea. A warm spring running into one of the streams was, however, the only indication of past volcanic action. In the pearling ground off the island of Sudest, there occurs again under the sea, at a depth of fifteen fathoms, a big quartz reef running through the live coral and sand bottom—whether gold-bearing or not I cannot say—and dipping underground as it nears the shore.

Some time after my arrival at Woodlark the schooner *Ivanhoe* came in bringing provisions, tools, etc., for the gold-diggers, together with a number of fresh arrivals, among whom was a Russian Finn, the meanest and, in his personal habits, the dirtiest beast I have ever met. This fellow proved most successful in his mining; but eventually, while prospecting near his claim, lost himself in the forest. Upon his being missed, a search party was organized by the diggers to look for him, but after some weeks the quest was abandoned as hopeless and the man given up for lost; a considerable amount was, however, subscribed and offered by the diggers as a reward to anyone finding or bringing him in. The Finn, in the long run, was discovered in a starving condition by some natives who, after

feeding him and nursing him back to life, brought him to the mining camp, where he learnt of the reward offered for his recovery. He then had the ineffable impudence to object to its being paid over to the natives on the ground that it was subscribed for his benefit and that therefore he should receive it, magnanimously saying, however, that the natives should be given a few pounds of tobacco. Needless to remark, his views were disregarded, and the natives received the full amount; the man, however, as he was yet in a weak state of health and professed to have lost all his gold, was given sufficient to pay his passage to Samarai and to maintain himself for a month from a fresh "harvest" collection. At Samarai he resided for some time, cadging, loafing, and pleading poverty, until one day the repose of the inhabitants was disturbed by waves of bitter grief proceeding from the interior of a small building, which was built over a bottomless hole descending through the coral rock, and was used by the islanders as a receptacle for refuse. Inquiry disclosed the fact that, during all the time he was lost and later the Finn had worn a belt next his skin containing over two hundred ounces of gold, which he had kept carefully concealed. Having cadged a little more gold, he had gone to the small building, as being the most secluded place, to add it to his store when, being suddenly startled, he had inadvertently knocked the belt into the hole, where it lies to this day.

This was an instance of a man losing his gold, and well he deserved it; but I knew of another instance in which a large amount of gold was lost and recovered in a manner so miraculous, that but for the fact that many men are yet living in New Guinea, fully acquainted with all the circumstances, I should hesitate to tell the story.

A part

in a small cutter chartered for the occasion, the gold belonging to the individual men in their separate parcels or "shammys" as they are called—the name is derived from a corruption of chamois, the skin of which animal is fondly supposed by diggers to furnish the only material for bullion bags—being sown up together in a large hoop of canvas, and placed on the hatch in open view of all hands. The weather was fine and clear, no danger being anticipated, when as the vessel entered China Straits she was struck by a sudden squall, and heeling over shot the diggers' shammys into the scuppers, through one of which they disappeared. So soon as the startled skipper could collect his wits and get his vessel in hand, he took soundings and bearings, and running hastily into Samarai, collected such pearlers as were there working, and offered half the gold to any of them recovering it. Several pearlers at once sailed for the spot, accompanied by the cutter of the bereaved diggers, which dropped her anchor at the scene of the accident and proceeded to watch operations. Diver after diver descended and toiled, diver after diver ascended and reported a soft mud bottom and a hopeless quest; pearler after pearler lifted his anchor and went back to Samarai, until at last the cutter hoisted her anchor also, preparatory to taking the diggers back to the gold-fields. A disconsolate lot of men watched that anchor coming up, but I leave to the imagination the change in their expressions when, clinging in the mud to the fluke of the anchor, they saw their canvas belt of gold.

After the departure of Sylvester I went into partnership with one Karl Wilsen, a Swede; he furnishing towards the assets of the partnership a poor claim and local mining experience, I, a well-filled chest of drugs and some knowledge of medicine. A couple of weeks after our partnership had been arranged, Lobb, the

original prospector of the island, appeared at our claim with the news of a new gold find, at which he advised us to peg out a claim. At the same time he told me he was sailing for Samarai in a lugger owned by his partner Ede, in order to buy fresh stores, and asked me for company's sake to go with him, holding out, as an inducement, that by doing so I could obtain some natives to assist in the heavy manual labour of the claim. Wilsen hastily left for the new find to peg out a joint claim for the pair of us, and I departed with Lobb for Samarai.

Lobb's vessel, on which I now found myself, was an old P. and O. lifeboat, built up until of about seven tons burthen, lug-rigged on two masts, and carrying a crew of six Testé Island ("Wari") boys. Lobb, I soon found to be absolutely ignorant of the most elementary knowledge of either seamanship or navigation; the seamanship necessary for our safe journey being furnished by the Wari boys, who had for generations been the makers and sailors of the large Wari sailing canoes trading between the islands. This kind of navigation consisted of sailing from island to island, being entirely dependent on the local knowledge of individual members of the crew to identify each island when sighted.

Shortly after leaving Woodlark we fell into a dead calm which lasted until nightfall—after which Lobb improved the occasion by getting drunk—then came on heavy variable rain squalls, during which the native crew appealed to me as to how they were to steer; being unable to see, they did not know where they were going, and Lobb was not by any means in a state to direct them. Fortunately I had noticed the compass bearing when we had left the passage from Woodlark and headed for Iwa, this being the line laid down by the

we should be safe if we followed that, and their replying "we should be," I pasted a slip of white paper on the compass card and told them to keep it in a line with the jib-boom. When dawn broke, we had Iwa in front of us a few miles ahead, and running slowly up to it, hove-to in deep water, there being no anchorage off its shores.

Iwa is a somewhat remarkable island, and inhabited by a somewhat remarkable people. Rising sheer from the sea with precipitous faces, the only means of access to the summit is by the inhabitants' ladders, made of vines and poles lashed together. The summit consists of shelving tablelands and terraces, all under a system of intense cultivation; yams, taro, the root of a sort of Arum, sweet potatoes, paw paws, pumpkins, etc., being grown in enormous quantities. The island of Iwa is quite impregnable so far as any attack by an enemy unarmed with cannon is concerned, and the natives have succeeded well as pirates in years gone by. From the top of Iwa, a clear view of many miles of surrounding sea could be had, and the husbandman, toiling in his garden, usually owned a share in a large paddle canoe, one of many hauled up in the crevices and rocks at the foot of the precipices of his island home. Sooner or later he would sight a sailing canoe, belonging to one of the other islands, becalmed or brought by the drift of currents to within sight of Iwa. At once, in response to his yell, a dozen paddle canoes, crowded with men, would take the water, and unless a breeze in the meantime sprang up, the traders usually fell easy victims. Reprisals there could be none, for no war party dispatched by one of the outraged tribes had a hope of scaling the cliffs of Iwa. The people there possessed an unusual skill in wood-carving, their paddles, shaped like a water-lily leaf, being frequently marvels of workmanship.

Lobb remained hove-to for a couple of days at Iwa purchasing copra (dried cocoanut kernel), used for making oilcake for cattle and the better quality of soap together with the before-mentioned beautiful carved paddles of the people. Sometimes the lugger lay within a couple of hundred yards of the shore, sometimes she drifted out a couple of miles, whereupon half a dozen canoes, manned by a dozen sturdy natives, would drag us back to within the shorter distance. On the second day of our stay I witnessed a particularly callous and brutal murder. A woman swam out and sold a paddle to Lobb, for which she received payment in tobacco. Swimming ashore she met a man, apparently her husband, to whom she handed the tobacco. He, seeming not to be at all pleased with the price, struck the woman, and she fled into the sea, where he pursued and clubbed her, the body of the murdered woman drifting out and past our vessel. Lobb, to my amazement, took absolutely no notice of this little incident, and upon my drawing his attention to it and suggesting we should seize the murderer and take him to Samarai for trial, merely remarked that I should do better to mind my own business.

Upon leaving the island, four days' sail put us in Samarai, where, amongst other things in the course of casual conversation, I told Moreton of the murder I had seen at Iwa. Moreton questioned Lobb, who professed to know nothing about it. Lobb then tackled me, asking whether I was desirous of hanging about Samarai for three or four months, at my own expense, waiting for a sitting of the Central Court—the only court in New Guinea for capital offences—and upon my replying that in that case I should starve as I had little money and there was no opportunity in Samarai of making any, Lobb said, "Exactly well, you had better forget all about that murder."

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a, or you will be kept here." I then went again to Moreton, who asked me whether I could swear to the man who did the murder, and I replied that I could not, as he was some hundred yards distant from me at the time and one native looked very like another. Moreton remarked, "I think Lobb's advice to you is rather good, better follow it."

Lobb remained about a week in Samarai recruiting a number of "boys" for work in his claim, and among them a couple, Sione and Gisavia, for me. We then sailed again for Woodlark. Upon our arrival back at the gold-field, I heard that the claim pegged out by Wilsen for the pair of us was a very rich one, but that he had taken Bill the Boozer into partnership instead of me. This story I found to be true; Wilsen had been tempted by a solid bribe when he found how good the ground was, and had drawn the pegs in my portion, which were at once replaced by Bill the Boozer, Wilsen declaring that I had gone for good. Wilsen and I then had a fight, in which I succeeded in giving him the father of a licking; this being followed by a lawsuit which I lost, mainly owing to the magnificent powers of lying displayed by Wilsen and the Boozer. I only met Wilsen twice after this, once, when he was witness in a court in which I was presiding as magistrate, and where he was so glib and fluent that I gave judgment for the opposing side, feeling quite convinced that any people Wilsen was connected with must be in the wrong; and again, when I held an inquest on his corpse, his death having been caused by his getting his life line and air pipe entangled while diving for pearl shell, and being paralysed by the long sustained pressure. These events, however, were to occur at a later time.

In the meantime I had no claim, and it behoved me to find one; whereupon, accompanied by Sione

Gisavia, I wandered off into the jungle of Wood in search of a gold-bearing gully. Creek after creek and gully after gully we sunk holes in and tried, sometimes getting for our pains a few pennyweight gold, but more often nothing. For food we depended on a small mat of rice of about fifty pounds weight carried by one boy, and as many sweet potatoes, yam or taro we could pick up from wandering natives. The other boy carried a pick and shovel, tin crowbar, axe and knife, and three plain deal boards with a few nails, comprising our simple mining equipment, together with a sheet of calico, used as a "wind" or tent, to keep the rain from us at night. My outfit consisted of a spare shirt, trousers and boots, a revolver, ammunition, two billy cans for making and boiling rice, compass and matches, and last but not least a small roll case of the excellent tabloid drugs of Messrs. Burroughs and Wellcome.

In our wanderings we struck a valley—now known as Bushai—where at intervals of three hundred yards we put down pot holes without a "colour" to the surface. (A colour is a speck of gold, however minute.) I was an instance of bad luck sometimes dogging the prospector, for, some months later, a man named Mackenzie found the valley, and in the first hole he sunk found rich gold, while the claims pegged out on each side of his holding proved very payable "shows." I came there again when it was a proved field, recognizing the valley, asked Mackenzie whether on his first arrival he had noticed any pot holes. "Yes," he said, "three of them. I don't know who made them, but they were the only spots in the valley where I could not find a payable prospect." There was then no ground left for me, so I went away, cursing the fates that had made me select the only bad parts of a rich valley in which to sink my holes.

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This incident, however, belongs to a later day, and having "duffered" the valley as I thought, my boys and I prowled on through the forest over the place where the Kulamadau mine now stands, at which point we finished our "tucker" and obtained a few ounces of gold, enough to buy supplies for a few more weeks, when we should get to some place where such could be obtained. Living mainly on roots and a few birds, we fell into a mangrove swamp, where the three of us obtained such a crop of mangrove ulcers that we were hardly able to walk, and were obliged to strike straight for the sea. My boys, of course, wore no boots, and their swollen legs, painful as they might be, were not so inconvenient to them as mine were to me; for in my case I did not dare to take off my boots, for fear of not being able to get my enlarged feet into them again.

After a day with nothing to eat, we found the sea and an alligator. The alligator I shot, and we were eating him when we saw the sails of a schooner coming round a point close in shore. By dint of firing my revolver, and my boys howling vigorously, we attracted the attention of those on board; and a boat was lowered and sent to us, in which we went off to her, and then I discovered it was German Harry's craft, the *Galatea*. German Harry had a cargo of stores for Woodlark, and was accompanied by a European wife—not his own, but some one else's with whom he had bolted. He received me with sympathy and hospitality, and, telling his cook to boil quantities of hot water for the treatment of my own and my boys' mangrove ulcers, set to work looking for bandages and soothing unguents, leaving me to be entertained by the other man's wife.

A fortnight I put in with German Harry, acting for him as a sort of supercargo in tallying the sale of his cargo, listening to his tales of experiences in the islands,

picking up the rudiments of navigation and the whole art of diving for pearls and mother-of-pearl by aid of the apparatus manufactured by either Siebe Gorman or Heinke, the only two firms of submarine engineers considered by the pearl fishers as at all worthy of patronage. Harry had on board the complete plants, from air pumps to dresses, of the rival manufacturers; and after exhaustive trials I came to the same conclusion as he, that both were equally excellent in still waters, and both beastly dangerous in currents or rough seas.

At the end of the two weeks the *Galatea* sailed for other parts, and I, refusing Harry's invitation to accompany him again, plunged once more into the forest of Woodlark in search of gold and fortune. On this trip my sole discovery was some aged lime trees and old hard wood piles of European houses, which later inquiry among the natives showed me were the remains of an old French Jesuit Mission long since come and gone; these trees and piles and a few French words current among the natives, such as "couteaux," being all that was left of their work.

Wandering back from the second and even more disastrous trip than the first (for in addition to an entire lack of gold and a second crop of ulcers, my boys and myself had now added intermittent and severe malaria to our stock-in-trade), I dropped into a gully in which a white miner was working by his lonesome self. Jim Brady was his name, and after feeding us and listening to our tales of adventure, or rather misadventure, he spake thus: "I have a damned poor show here, just about pays tucker, but if you like to chip in with your boys we will do a little better, and when we have fattened up a bit, one can keep the show going while t'other looks for something better." Eagerly I accepted this offer, my boys and myself being only too thankful to find somewhere to rest out of the rain, with a fair

prospect of three square meals a day. Brady and I then worked together for some months with varying fortune; the sole dissension arising between us being due to my stealing a piece of calico, in which he used to boil duff, with which to patch my only remaining pair of trousers.

Then one afternoon, whilst I and the two boys were digging out wash dirt and feeding the "sluice box," he suddenly squealed, "What in the devil's name are you sending me now? It's a porphery leader and giving a weight to the dish," *i.e.* a pennyweight of gold, worth about three shillings and fourpence. Brady then came and looked at the place where I was digging, and remarked, "Cover it up with mullock at once, it's a good thing and we don't want a crowd here." I remonstrated, saying that we wanted all the gold we could get; but Brady said, "Yes, and we want all the ground we can get and enough money to clear from this blasted country; that leader wants capital, for which we shall have to arrange." In obedience to Brady's instructions I covered up the leader, and had hardly finished doing so, when an excited digger dropped into our claim exclaiming, "Have you heard the news? Mackenzie has struck a new gully with an ounce to the dish." Brady and I at once bolted for a newly opened store to arrange a credit for tucker, to enable him to proceed to the new find. In the meanwhile, I was to remain and work our present claim to cover expenses. The store-keeper, one Thompson, was obdurate, refusing to give us any credit or even to sell us sufficient supplies for gold, to enable Brady to go to the new rush, he wishing to assist his own friends, or rather those men who could be depended on to spend all their earnings in grog at his store.

Brady and I were sitting most disconsolately outside the store when a cutter, the *White Squall*, came in

loaded with diggers, but no supplies, when I suddenly overheard a remark of Thompson's: "By God, I must buy or charter that cutter for Samarai for stores." The cutter brought a mail, and amongst my letters I found a notice from Burns, Philp and Co., that £100 had been placed to my credit at Samarai; whereupon Thompson's remark recurred to my memory. "Jim," I said to Brady, "how much gold have we?" "Ten ounces," he said. "Hand it over," said I, "I have a ploy." Brady handed it over, and I sought the owner of the cutter, saying I wanted to buy her. He said he was asking Thompson £100 for her, but Thompson was a . . . Jew and only offered £60. I replied, "Well, here are ten ounces on deposit, and an order on Burns, Philp and Co., of Samarai, for the rest, and this letter of theirs will show it is all right." In five minutes the deal was completed; and the *White Squall* papers being handed over to me, I returned to Brady. "Jim," I said, "you need a sea trip and so do I; also we will set up as yacht owners and store-keepers. Let's go up to Thompson and tell him the good news." We found him and told him we had bought the *White Squall*, and intended to sail her to Samarai ourselves. I also pointed out that there was an absolute dearth of supplies at Woodlark, and we expected to make a good thing by store-keeping. Thompson's language, as Bret Harte has it, was for a time "painful and free"; then he rushed off to the former owners of the cutter, to try and persuade them to cancel the deal as we were "dead broke," and could not pay for the vessel. Unfortunately, however, for him the vendors chose to consider us as honest men, this apart from having completed the deal, and told Thompson to go to a warmer region. He then came again to me with an *ad misericordiam* appeal. "Look here, if I don't get this boat I an

I never thought that you two dead beats could buy a vessel, or I would have bid higher." I gently pointed out that all Brady and I had wanted was fair treatment from him, which we had not got; also that we had no wish to become store-keepers or traders, but as he had forced us into the position, he could either buy us out or count on our opposition in his own business. I then remarked that I would leave the negotiations to Brady.

Brady's terms were short and sweet: £100 for the vessel, £100 on top of that for ourselves, together with Thompson's original offer of £60. Thompson squealed loudly, but as we were ready to go to sea, accepted the offer and took over the *White Squall*. In passing I might now remark that later knowledge showed me the *White Squall* was not worth £5; she was thoroughly rotten, the only good things about her being her pumps. She had sneaked out of a Queensland port without the cognizance of the authorities; but of these facts at the time I was ignorant; and Brady and I were much surprised to hear later that, after three or four highly profitable trips for Thompson, she had sunk. Her sinking was caused by an irate master leaping suddenly down into the fore-castle to deal with a recalcitrant member of the crew, and in his energy sending his legs through her rotten planking.

After the completion of the *White Squall* deal, Brady went off to the new rush, where he pegged out a good claim, I remaining to shepherd our old one. A few days after his departure I received a note from him saying I had better abandon the claim I was holding, as our lode was safely buried, and come to the new rush. On my way thither I dropped into a gully and began prospecting it, just as another white man, accompanied as I was by two boys, started the same game. We both struck highly payable gold at about

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the same time, and each claimed the gully by right of discovery. For two or three minutes we—each with drawn revolvers, and each backed by our boys armed respectively with a rifle and fowling piece—argued the question; and in the end, as an alternative to murdering one another, decided to go into partnership and work it jointly, each to divide our share with our former mates.

My new partner was named John Graham; he had previously been an assistant Resident Magistrate in the service of the British New Guinea Government, and later the owner of some pearl-fishing vessels. We worked together very amicably for some months, when receiving a good offer for our claim, we sold out and separated; he to buy the wreck of a vessel with the intention of refitting it and resuming trading. After about a week's work again with Brady, some severe attacks of malaria gave me a distinct hint to go to sea for a short time, and at my suggestion we dissolved partnership, Brady remaining in the claim, and I with my two boys, going to Suloga Bay with the intention of there finding a vessel bound for Samarai.

CHAPTER IV

AT Suloga Bay I found Graham still waiting, in charge of a small cutter owned by a local resident, which he had undertaken to take to Samarai for repairs and a new crew, the original boys having deserted to the mines. Graham had a couple of natives as crew, but, as the cutter was leaking badly, had been afraid to put to sea weak-handed. My arrival with my two boys, however relieved him of this difficulty, and away we went for Samarai.

Never since then have I known such a wholly beastly trip as that one was. We were all rotten with malaria, the cutter's decks were warped and leaking everywhere from lying in the sun, consequently day and night we had to pump the wretched boat out, or she half filled. The North-West Monsoon was on; and the weather principally consisted of flat calms, during which we grilled under a burning sun, or fierce squalls accompanied by torrential rains, in which our rotten sails burst, and beneath decks was more like a combination of Turkish and shower baths than anything else. Pumping ship, patching sails, drying our clothes, and belting our sick boys into performing their necessary duties, formed our occupation; cursing freely, and betting on our temperatures taken with a clinical thermometer, our diversion; mouldy rice, stringy, oily, ever-warm tinned beef, pumpkin and stodgy taro, our diet. Vile tea and dirty-looking sugar we abandoned for a more healthful beverage, consisting of five grains of quinine and one drop of carbolic acid to a pannikin

of water, always, of course, lukewarm. Dysentery beginning amongst the boys added to our woes; but fortunately for us, we crawled through the China Straits into Samarai on the day following their being taken ill, and gladly handed over our rotten tub to the boat-builders.

Here, Graham and I separated; he, after a week's rest, going to see to his wreck, and I remaining to recuperate as the only guest in the "Golden Fleece Hotel," which had recently been instituted by Tommy Rous upon a capital of ten pounds. The hotel consisted of one large room with a verandah all round it, a small room used as a cook-house detached from the other, and a bar-room next to Tommy's bedroom. All the buildings were made of palms laced together and thatched with the leaf of the sago palm; with the exception of Tommy's bedroom and the bar-room the whole place was innocent of doors and windows, other than square holes in the walls to admit light and air. The guests were expected to provide their own blankets, plates, knives, forks, and pannikins, and to sleep on the palm floor. A long wooden table ran down the verandah, at which meals were eaten. Meals never varied; Tommy's cook, a New Guinea boy, had but two dishes: "situ," which consisted of tinned meat, yams, sweet potatoes and pumpkins all stewed together; and "kari," the same meat mixed with curry powder and served with rice. Anything else, fish or fresh game for instance, the guests were supposed to provide for themselves.

Tommy was the son of a New Zealand doctor and had gone to sea as a surgeon on one of Burns, Philp and Co.'s vessels. The ship had crushed and at his order where Armi

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Charles Arbouine, the manager for Burns, Philp and Co. at Samarai, suggested to Tommy that, as he was now incapacitated for any other work, he should start a hotel and relieve the firm of the retail liquor trade, he, Arbouine, being tired of traders and diggers clamouring to be served with drinks at all times. Tommy accordingly expended his capital in the building before mentioned, and with a staff of one native boy began business. Graham and I were his first regular guests. Nightly to the pub came Armit, Arbouine, one of the Whittens, or any wandering trader, to play whist or to gossip; if five or six were present we varied whist by loo or poker, in which quinine tabloids were used to represent counters of sixpence, and pistol cartridges shillings or half-crowns according to their calibre.

A fortnight or so after my return to Samarai, Moreton came back from a cruise in the *Siai*, and our monotony was further relieved by the arrival of a number of lucky diggers proceeding to that island. The result was that the "Golden Fleece" became most unpleasantly crowded, and I prepared to flit.

Tommy Rous, however, developed a nasty attack of malaria accompanied by hæmorrhage of the lungs due to his accident, and begged me to stay with him until his visitors had departed. He said, "It will be no trouble to you; just look after the pub until I am well again or this lot have cleared out. All you have to do, is to order the stores and collect the cash." I protested that I knew nothing about running pubs and didn't want to learn, also that I was certain that Tommy was going to be very ill and I should have to look after the show. Privately, Armit, Moreton and I were certain he was going to die. He cut short my protests by saying, "he knew nothing and I could not know less," and followed it by becoming so ill that it would have been sheer cruelty to remove him from

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his room or trouble him with anything. The result was that I suddenly found myself in the position of unpaid hotel-keeper.

Tommy's boy, the cook, began complications by striking cook's duties to go and attend to him, and I had to turn on my own two boys as cooks. They were zealous and willing, but I feel convinced that their efforts in the culinary art seriously increased the flow of profanity in the hotel's digger guests and impaired their faint hope of Heaven. I then made it a fixed rule that everything supplied was for cash, as I was not going to be bothered keeping accounts; this rule also caused a lot of profanity, as the supply of silver in the island was limited, and the diggers frequently had to wait for drinks until I had paid the takings into Burns, Philp and Co., and they again had bought it out for gold dust. At ten o'clock I closed the bar, in order that the row should not disturb Rous; whereupon some of our lodgers would go to bed on the floor of the big room, others would take bottles and visit various vessels or yarn on the beach, whilst another lot would adjourn to Whitten's store. I then paid a visit to Tommy, fixed him up for the night, and told him the result of the day's takings. After which my boys made me up a bed in the bar, and we turned in for the night.

About midnight the first contingent of stray guests would return, more or less drunk, fall over those already occupying spaces on the floor and, after torrents of blasphemy and recriminations, turn in. After this, at intervals ranging until daylight, they returned in two's and three's, some singing, some arguing, some swearing, some quarrelling, but nearly all signaling their arrival by also falling over the sleepers on the floor and again causing fresh floods of blasphemy and bad temper, which, in nine cases out of ten, ended in a free fight. Among our guests at the "Golden Fleece"

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were two who, when all else was peaceful, were almost certain to start a row, being just about as adaptable to one another as oil to water. The one was named Farquhar, a man as comfortable in the surroundings he was in, as a turtle would be on a tight-rope; the other was O'Regan the Rager, a digger.

Farquhar had been a bank manager in Australia, and was a man particularly precise in his speech and neat in his personal appearance, however worn, or darned his clothes might be, and the untidiness and lurid language of one type of digger were abhorrent to him. O'Regan was one of this type; he was never sober when he had an opportunity of being drunk, never washed, slept in his clothes and at all times diffused an odour of stale drink and fermenting humanity. Farquhar's expression during the day-time when O'Regan was in the vicinity would assume that of a spinster aunt suspicious of a defect in the drainage, and with turned shoulders and averted face he would endeavour not to see O'Regan. The latter would glare at him and mutter things about "——broken down, white-livered swells." Night would come, Farquhar would go to bed, the rows and riots would subside into peaceful snores, when last of all O'Regan would return with about two bottles of the most potent rum inside him. Screams and yells would herald his arrival. "Phwere is that —— Farker? I'm the blankety blank best man in the blanky camp, wid me hands will I thare the blanky crimson guts from his insoide." Then O'Regan, climbing upon the verandah, would make night hideous with his yells, the while he banged the table with his stick, and hurled defiance at mankind at large and threats at Farquhar's viscera in particular. Sometimes a storm of oaths and missiles from the annoyed and sleepy inmates of the room would quench O'Regan's thirst for blood, and he would peacefully

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and in especial the work of the Anglican Mission, the Mission of the Sacred Heart, and the Wesleyan Methodist Mission. It was my good fate during the period I spent in New Guinea to come into intimate personal relations with the Archbishop of Navarre and Bishop de Boismenu of the Sacred Heart Mission, the Right Rev. Dr. Stone-Wigg, the Anglican Bishop of New Guinea, and the Reverend William Bromilow of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission, and I never parted from these gentlemen without thinking what a particularly wise choice their respective churches had made when they were selected to control the work of their denominations in New Guinea.

The other Societies there made the mistake of having no direct control vested in the older and more experienced members over the younger recruits to their ranks. This system always appeared to me to be absolutely rotten. Time after time I have seen junior and inexperienced members of the Sacred Heart, the Anglican, and the Wesleyan Missions get at loggerheads with the native, the trader, or the Government officials in their districts; and time after time have I seen all friction smoothed away by the tactful action of the experienced heads of these Missions, in exercising a wise restraint over their subordinates. And time after time, as a magistrate, have I had to curse the troubles arising from the action of some member of the other Missionary Societies—as a rule due to the ignorance and conceit of youth—and to regret that there was no wise head exercising control to whom I could appeal.

CHAPTER V

At length Tommy Rous' boarders all departed. His health seemed to be somewhat better, for a while at any rate, and I felt that I could leave him with a clear conscience. As I was thoroughly sick both of prospecting for gold and hotel-keeping, I purchased the cutter *Mizpah*, and manned her with a crew of six Papuans, getting also the Resident Magistrate's permission to arm them. At the same time I chartered from Messrs. Burns, Philp and Co. the luggers *Ada*, *Hornet*, and *Curlew*, fully equipped with diving plants and crews of Malays and Manilla men; and also engaged Billy the Cook, late of the *Myrtle*, to take charge of the three, bound under the guidance of the *Mizpah*, on a general prospecting voyage for pearl or mother-of-pearl anywhere in the Coral Sea, the latter commodity then having a value of about £150 per ton, with the chance—a very remote chance it is true—of valuable pearls being found in the shells. The *Mizpah* was fitted with a deep-sea dredging apparatus, having, prior to my purchase, been owned by a scientist, a Dr. Wylie, who had come to New Guinea, I was told, in search of the deep-sea nautilus.

Leaving Samarai we rapidly ran down to East Cape, when, coming to anchor, Billy came on board my boat to discuss a plan of action for my venture. At the very beginning Billy and I differed, to my future loss I must own; for had I taken his advice as then tendered, I should have made a fair profit instead of ending in a heavy loss. Billy's advice was that we should proceed

to an old pearling ground well known by him, and worked for many years, off the island of Sudest, and commence operations there, where we were certain to make a few hundreds in a short time. My idea was to search for an entirely new ground, where we might make many thousands in a few weeks, off the shores of Goodenough Island. Billy, finding that I was fixed in my views as to our procedure, persuaded me to wait several days at East Cape, fishing, and to send a boat into Samarai for salt to cure the fish.

We fished in this manner. Firstly, we stationed men at the masthead to view the approach of shoals of trevalli passing through the narrow channels, and then sent out boats to throw amongst them dynamite cartridges with a twenty-second fuse attached. The explosion of the cartridges stunned the fish, and enabled them to be raked in by the boys forming our crews. Secondly, we sent the divers down armed with small spears, and they speared the cod which had been attracted by the dead fish or the diver. The ordinary rock cod, proper, or more properly gorupa, has no fear of a diver in dress, and will swim up and gaze into the face glass of the helmet, and hence falls an easy victim to the spear. It is, however—with the exception of the octopus—the diver's greatest enemy, from the same lack of fear. No real diver is afraid of the shark, but all dread the greater codfish.

The shark at best is a most cowardly scavenger of the sea; much preferring, even when hungry, to gorge on carrion than to kill its own prey. And even when made bold by hunger, it is readily frightened away by the sudden emission of air bubbles from the valve in the diver's helmet. A diver, when approached by a large shark, seldom troubles much, so long as the fish does not get too near to his air pipe. He fears that, because sharks have an unpleasant habit of suddenly

rolling over and snapping at a fairly quiescent object. Should a shark's attention, however, prove too persistent, the diver signals for the fullest possible pressure of air, and then either walks towards the fish or, if it is higher up and interfering with his air pipe, rises in the water and suddenly turns on his valves; result, immediate flight of Mr. Shark.

The codfish, however, is afraid of nothing, and will nose up to a diver, smell round him until it discovers his naked hands, and then bite them off. Owing to this unpleasant trait on the part of the codfish, the first and important duty of a diver's tender is to wash the former's hands thoroughly with soap, soda, and warm water before he descends, in order to remove any trace of perspiration or grease from them. A diver's hands are the sole portion of his body outside the diving suit, the dress ending at the wrists, where thick india-rubber bands prevent the admission of water and expulsion of air. Should a diver meet a large groper, the only thing to be done is to either ascend twenty or thirty feet and drift out of the short-sighted fish's range of vision or, if there is no tide or current, rise to the surface. Then he can lower a dynamite cartridge or two, which will either kill, wound, or frighten the beast away. A groper, I have been told by divers, and my own experience bears this out, will never pursue a diver or leave the bottom; it is sluggish in the extreme. These fish grow to an immense size. I have myself seen a fish so large that, when his mouth was open, the lower jaw was on the bottom and the upper jaw above the level of one's helmet. My own opinion is that, as the cachalot preys upon the larger, so the gropers prey upon the smaller form of octopi; otherwise I fail to see how so slow and bulky a fish, a fish too that is not a carrion feeder, can possibly catch enough food on which to live.

I have mentioned a diver's tender. This person and the diver are usually engaged together, and in most cases have been close friends and associates through many engagements. The tender's duties are to keep the air pumps, dress, pipes, etc., in apple-pie order, to hold the diver's life-line and air tubes while he is below, and to receive his signals and communicate them to the master of the vessel. On this man's constant watchfulness the life of the diver depends. At the time of which I write, all signals from a diver at work were conveyed by numbered jerks on the life-line. I believe now, however, the diver's helmets are fitted with a telephone, through which he speaks direct to his tender. The submarine telephone must add immensely to the safety of the diver, for by its means he can explain exactly what he wants or what difficulty he is in.

For instance, I have known the case of a diver landing his leg in a large clam shell, which of course immediately closed upon it, the shell weighing probably three or four hundred pounds and being fastened to the bottom. The man signalled "pull up." The tender passed on the signal, and after the life-line had been tugged and strained at for some time, ordered it and the pipe to be slacked under the impression that it was fast round a coral mushroom. The result was, that before another boat could be summoned and a second diver went down to ascertain the trouble, the first man had exceeded his time limit and was stricken fatally with divers' paralysis. Had the diver then possessed a telephone, a second line could have been sent down to him by a heavy iron ring slid down his own life-line, and by him have been attached to the shell; whereupon man and shell together could have been hoisted by the ship's winch.

Having collected and salted our fish, we sailed away

for Dawson Straits, between Ferguson and Goodenough Islands. My intention was to prospect the narrow sea lying between the latter island and the Trobriand group for pearl shell; the north-eastern coast of Goodenough Island was at this time merely marked on the Admiralty charts by a dotted line, with the terse remark, "Little known of the northern shores of these islands." In Dawson Straits we drilled our crews for some days in their routine work, whilst I accustomed myself to the use of a diver's dress. Billy the Cook, I regret to say, flatly refused to have anything to do with work under the water.

Our method of procedure was this. Firstly, by sounding, we found a level sandy bottom of anything under twenty fathoms. Pearl shell is peculiar for growing only on a perfectly flat surface. Then the vessel was hove-to or allowed to drift with the current, while the anchor was lowered some ten feet beneath the vessel's keel. The diver then descended by the anchor chain, and seated himself astride of the anchor. At his signal it was lowered until within about six feet of the bottom, the vessel then being allowed to drift while the diver scrutinized the bottom for signs of pearl shell. Upon his sighting shell, he gave two sharp tugs at his life-line, which meant, "Slack life-line and pipe let go anchor." Immediately upon giving his signal and finding his life-line and pipe released, the diver leapt from the anchor, the anchor dropped, and he began work. For sign of shell it was sufficient to see certain marine plants which almost invariably occur under the same conditions as pearl shell. The diver when below water is in supreme command of the vessel through his tender, and there can be no possible excuse for disobeying either his first or second signals. The first, consisting of one tug on his life-line, meaning "More air, I am in great danger, pull me up." The

second, of two tugs, meaning "Slack all, I am on shell." One peculiar thing about pearl shell is, that it only occurs in payable quantities where tidal currents are very strong. Where the current runs at less than three knots, though one may find shell, it is rotten and worm-eaten; where the currents are strong it is clean and thick. My own impression is that a strong force of water is necessary to tear and distribute the spawn from the parent oyster; when that force is lacking disease and degeneracy set in.

There are many theories as to the causation of pearls in the pearl shell; the most common is the particularly idiotic one of a grain of sand, or other foreign body, inserting itself within the shell and setting up an irritation which causes the oyster to build round the intruder a smooth coat of pearly matter. This theory is senseless on the face of it. From its natural habitat every pearl oyster must have thousands of grains of sand or other bodies lodged against its lips in each tide. The lips of a pearl oyster consist of a curious vascular membrane tapering to a slimy filmy substance at the outer edge; assuming a small speck of sand came it would adhere to the slimy edge; if a larger body the lips would close. Granted that a foreign article passed the lips, the outer skin of the fish is a very tough thing, and it would be almost impossible for the grain of sand, or other matter, to penetrate to where lie the glands which secrete the substance forming the pearly lining of the shell. A fact which shows the fallacy of the theory is this: that though one may remove the multitudinous skins of the pearl until whittled down to nothing, it is impossible ever to discover in the centre of the pearl as a core a grain of sand, or anything differing from the pure composition of the pearl. If, in one chance out of ten millions, a grain of sand passed the lips of the shell and lodged on the skin of the

fish, the next tide would wash it away again. However, plainly, from the small percentage of pearl-bearing oysters, the pearl is a disease, and, I hold, not due to extraneous causes. Just as uric acid produces stone or gravel in humans, so does some similar irritant produce the pearl in the oyster. I leave it to other and wiser heads to say what the origin of the pearl is; I only say emphatically what it is not.

In Dawson Straits we remained some days prospecting the bottom without luck, and meanwhile discovered a passage behind the island of Wagipa to a secure anchorage for small vessels. Here the *Mizpah* lay for some days while the luggers continued prospecting, and here I had my first experience of hostile natives. The natives of Goodenough Island at this time enjoyed a most unenviable reputation, being generally regarded by traders as hostile and treacherous in the extreme. Until the day of which I now write we had not come into contact with them, save a few canoes manned by vegetable-vending natives.

On this day, being tired of sticky salt-water baths I landed with three or four of my crew, and followed a small stream inland to where a waterfall occurred in a gully. Here the falling water had scooped out a hole about three or four feet deep. Sending my boys back to the mouth of the gully, I stripped and, standing in the hole, indulged in a shower bath under the fall. Whilst I was so engaged, revolver and rifle lying on my clothes some few feet away, a native walked out from the bush, suddenly caught sight of me and, giving a loud screech, promptly hurled his spear at me and then fled. I jumped from the water hole as the spear flew and instead of catching me in the chest it caught me just above the knee, fortunately just as my knee was jerking upwards in my jump, the spear therefor turning to one side, and merely tearing a slit in my

flesh and skin, the scar of which, however, I carry to this day. My yells brought up my boys, who, running straight into the flying native, caught and held him. As soon as my bleeding was staunched, we hauled him off on board the *Mizpah*, where we found that he had a slight knowledge of Dobuan, a language with which one of my crew was acquainted. After we had soothed down his funk a little (for he fully expected to be immediately killed and eaten, as the Goodenough Islanders were themselves cannibals), he was asked what he meant by hurling his spear at me. His explanation was that he was returning from an expedition inland, that he had never seen a white man before, and when he saw me disporting in the water he had taken me for a devil, and flung his spear with the laudable intention of killing a devil before turning to flee from the uncanny thing.

Satadeai was the name of my new acquaintance, a man whose friendship I was to enjoy for many years afterwards; in fact, when later I became Resident Magistrate of the Eastern Division, I appointed him village constable for his tribe, a dignity which I believe he still enjoys. After we had soothed the feelings of Saturday, as I now called him, I presented him with some beads and a tomahawk and landed him again; telling him at the same time what our quest in the vicinity was, and offering him safe conduct at any time he or his people liked to come with vegetables for our little fleet. From this time Saturday became a regular visitor to the *Mizpah*, bringing fresh yams, taro, curios, etc., for sale; and also bringing me men to assist in working the air pumps of the diving plant, a manual labour of the heaviest description when divers are in deep water.

On one occasion he brought me as a present a curious, almost circular, tusk, a tusk so old that the

outer covering of enamel had worn off and antiquity had tinged it a pale yellow. The tusk was mounted in native money, small circular disks formed from the hinges of a rare shell, and hung on a sling to be worn round the neck. I thought the thing was an ordinary boar's tusk of unusual shape and size; Saturday, however, told me the following amazing yarn. He said that at the summit of Goodenough Island, or Moratau, as the natives called it, there lived an enormous snake with curious long and curved teeth, a snake so large and powerful that it was beyond the power of man to capture or destroy it. Goodenough Island, I might remark in passing, is the highest island of its size in the world; Mount York, its highest peak, being over 8,000 feet. Well, some generations before, there had lived on Goodenough a mighty hunter of Saturday's tribe and family, and on one occasion the hunter had ascended the mountain with the intention of killing the snake. Finding, however, that it was beyond the powers of mortal man to slay, he had surrounded its lair with sharp-pointed stakes driven firmly into the ground. When the snake emerged again, it had entangled or caught one of its curved tusks on a stake, and in its struggles to escape tore away the tusk, which Saturday now presented to me.

Afterwards in New Zealand I showed the tooth to Sir James Hector, who pronounced it to be a tusk of the *Sus Barbirusa*, a hog deer; an inhabitant of the East India Islands and an animal not known to exist in New Guinea. This tusk I afterwards gave to a friend of mine, Richard Burton of Longner Hall, Shrewsbury, in whose possession it now is; a gift that later caused me to be severely dealt with by Professor Haddon of anthropological fame, the professor holding that I should have presented it either to the Royal Anthropological Institute or the British Museum. I

am now of opinion that this tusk was wrongly assigned by Sir James Hector to the *Barbirusa*, but rightfully belongs to an animal not then known to science, though many years later reported by me as existing on the Owen Stanley Range, at a height of about 12,000 feet, on the mainland of New Guinea. The discovery of this animal and its description, however, occurs at a later stage of my life in New Guinea.

When we sailed from Wagipa, Saturday accompanied me on the *Mizpah* to the north-east coast of Goodenough Island, where he acted as interpreter for us. And being by this time fully acquainted with the object of our search, he induced the natives to guide us to a large patch of "saddle back" shell, which he and they assured us contained large quantities of the "stones" we valued. He was right in his statement, the shell was there in large quantities, and the shells held—a most unusual thing—large numbers of perfect-looking pearls. But, alas! the shell, for some unknown reason, was so soft as to be valueless, one could crush it between the hands; and the pearls, though beautiful to look upon when first obtained, lost their lustre in a single day and could be readily scratched with the fingernail. Saturday was the only New Guinea native that I ever knew who was anxious to go down in a diving dress, a wish on his part to which I sternly refused to accede.

The Goodenough Islanders are a somewhat remarkable race; of small physique, they speak a language peculiar to themselves; the men are liars, treacherous and subtle, but at the same time brave and capable of great attachment to any person for whom they have a regard. Some time after I first saw them, the small wiry men from Goodenough Island proved to be the best porters that New Guinea could furnish for the deadly work of carrying for the Northern Division.

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The common arms of the men were half a dozen light throwing spears, made from the black palm and having an effective throwing range of some thirty yards, a short triangular-bladed spear for use at close quarters, and a sling and stones. As a general rule ordinary pebbles of about the size of a billiard ball were hurled from the slings; but the slinger usually carried a couple of carefully hand-wrought stones resembling a pullet's egg in shape but pointed at both ends, which he flung from his sling on special occasions; that is, at times when he had a good clear opportunity of hitting his enemy, and wished to make no mistake about it. The effective range of these slings was up to two hundred yards on the level. They had an extraordinary habit of attaching a tail or cracker to the pouch of the sling, which, upon the stone leaving the pouch, made a sharp noise not unlike the crack of a rifle.

In their hill villages, usually placed upon commanding points or spurs, they build round stone towers covering all approaches. The purpose of the towers was this. A man when using a sling on the level could only use it at such a length as to reach, when whirled, from the bent arm to the ground. If standing on a flat-sided tower, however, the limit of the length of sling he could use was only decided by his strength and the weight of the missile he meant to hurl; and the greater the length of the sling and weight of projectile, the greater the effective range. Therefore a village possessing stone towers was, to all intents and purposes, a fortified position, as its slingers could outrange, and assail with heavier missiles, any attacking force armed with the sling. Stones from a pound to a pound and a half in weight were hurled from the giant slings plied by the slingers enough Islanders, therefore, pro-
were really, at the time of which

against any force unarmed with rifles. They also had a most extraordinary system of yam cultivation. Instead of making their yam gardens on the flat in good alluvial soil, they built circular stone walls beneath their villages on the slopes; and then laboriously carried earth in baskets and filled up the walls behind, until they formed a succession of artificial terraces on which they grew their yams. Certainly the yams there grown were larger and better than any others I have seen, but the labour in the first instance must have been appalling. The gardens also had the advantage of being covered by sling fire from the village towers and therefore, I suppose, were held to be safe from raiders. Lunacy, from what I could learn, was very common among these islanders; I believe due to in-breeding for many years. Totemism, the great preventive against in-breeding, apparently did not exist among them.

South from Wagipa, on the northern shores of Ferguson Island, lies Seymour Bay, a short distance inland from which there exists a country of great volcanic and thermal action. There, a hot stream flows to the sea; and there also exists a lake containing according to an analysis I had made of its waters, a huge quantity of the gouty man's friend, lithium whilst, surrounding its waters, there are acres and acres, feet deep, of pure yellow sulphur.

My pearl fishing on the northern shores of Goodenough came to an abrupt end. Billy the Cook had forgathered with me one night on the *Mizpah*, when our divers and tenders had asked permission to collect on one boat, the *Ada*, for a Malay jollification; the crew of the *Ada* meanwhile visiting friends on the other vessels. When morning came there was no *Ada*, and no divers or tenders; and Billy gently suggested to me that they had taken a pleasure trip to the

Trobriands. The first thing to be done before we could sail in search of our truants was to return Saturday to his home on Wagipa, as the law did not then permit any unindentured natives being taken more than twenty miles from where they lived, except for the purpose of being indentured, or as it is called "signed on." Saturday made it very clear indeed that if we landed him at the point at which we were then, the chances were greatly in favour of his finding his way into a cooking pot instead of his home. It would not do to send the *Hornet* with him, because, firstly, the crew were only armed with knives, and secondly, they were quite likely to follow the evil example of their mates and sneak off on pleasure bent. I thought of sending Billy in the *Curlew* with a couple of armed boys, he having his own rifle and revolver; but my boys objected to leaving my own vessel, and Billy said he was a married man and had not shipped to be sent alone into a Goodenough harbour. Also he pointed out that I might require the full strength of my New Guinea boys, the only men I could depend on, to deal with our confounded divers and tenders when we found them. The result of our deliberations, therefore, was the loss of two valuable days in returning Saturday.

Upon landing that worthy native we struck straight away from the Straits to the Trobriands, and had a horrible nightmare of a passage, for coral mushrooms and reefs seemed to strew the sea like plums in a pudding. Safe enough to navigate amongst when the sky was clear, they were, however, a deadly peril during the passage of a rain squall. The danger of a coral mushroom lies in the fact that it is so small that the sea seldom makes any noise upon it, also it springs up so suddenly from the bottom that the lead line proves no safeguard against it. No bottom at fifty fathoms one minute, a nigger head or mushroom with its head a

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couple of feet below the surface the next, is the pleasing habit of the sea between Goodenough Island and the Trobriands.

We did not attempt to sail at night, but either anchored over a submerged reef or hung on to the lee side of a shallow one, with our anchor on top of the reef and a kedge out astern. It is a risky proceeding anchoring in small vessels among coral, where the depth of the water is more than six fathoms, if unprovided with diving gear, or more than twenty, if fitted with that apparatus. For in nine cases out of ten, the chain or anchor becomes entangled in the coral mushrooms, and it is necessary for a man to go down and clear it before the anchor can be raised. Sometimes even a diver is unable to clear the tangle, especially if there is much current or wind keeping the vessel straining at her anchor; and in that case the last resource is to heave the chain in until it is up and down—that is, descends in a vertical line from the ship's bow to the bottom—and fasten big charges of dynamite fitted with burning fuses to a heavy iron ring, and slide them down the chain in the hope of smashing away the obstruction. Even this method sometimes fails, as some coral is of a dense cheesy consistency, and capable of resisting for a long time repeated explosions of dynamite. When this occurs, then one loses a valuable anchor and chain, a loss one cannot afford too often.

CHAPTER VI

At the Trobriands we sighted our missing *Ada* at anchor and, upon the *Mizpah* running alongside, discovered that she was full of native women. At first ugly looks and hands upon knives were the reception accorded by the deserters, but that was soon altered by my New Guinea boys. The divers and tenders expected bribes, argument, and persuasion to be used in order to induce them to return to their work, the sort of thing they had been accustomed to in the Torres Straits; instead of which, they got a curt order to get into the hold, and the next minute found their toes being smashed and their heads bumped by the brass-heeled butts of heavy Snider carbines. The New Guinea boys had always been rather despised by the Malays, and therefore were only too glad to get a little of their own back when opportunity offered. Spitting, cursing, and threatening, the Malays were all bumped below, and the hatches clapped on.

The next operation on the part of my crew was to throw all the women overboard, and let them swim ashore as best they were able. I may remark that all the Trobriand women could swim like fishes. A nice state we found the *Ada* in: stores, coats, spare gear, everything portable and of any value had been given to the women, not even the cooking utensils were left. If we had not arrived when we did, even her sails would have been cut up and disposed of. After viewing our

damage and loss, Billy and I held a parley with our men under hatches, and found the Malay dignity was hurt by the treatment our boys had accorded them; the result was, they said they had no intention of resuming duty. I plainly saw that if I gave in to the brutes I should be utterly undone, and my quest would become quite hopeless; at the same time, without them I could do nothing. Billy now suggested that if I could depend on my New Guinea boys, the best thing we could do was to lie at anchor where we were, and trade for pearls and bêche-de-mer; in the meanwhile keeping our mutineers confined, until in a more reasonable frame of mind. This policy I adopted. Putting a couple of my boys on the *Ada*, we hauled her up and made her fast to the *Mizpah*, leaving her recalcitrant inhabitants still under hatches with neither food nor water.

For twenty-four hours I kept the Malays below; and then, outside the sand-bank forming the harbour, we sighted Moreton's patrol schooner, the *Siai*, signalling to me to come out. Whereupon we moved the *Ada* from alongside the *Mizpah* to alongside the *Curlew*. The clatter and row made by this operation excited the curiosity of our prisoners, who, questioning the boys on deck, were told that the *Siai* was in sight, and that the *Mizpah* was going off to ask that they be taken and tried as pirates or ship-stealers. Awful howls and yells then came from the hold begging for an interview with me. Upon my going to the hatch and ordering the removal of one plank in order that the imprisoned men might talk to me, frenzied petitions for mercy were put up, accompanied by all sorts of strange oaths that, if forgiven, they would be good and faithful men in the future. Billy said, "Let 'em off, they will be all right in the future, and we can't afford to have them jugged; also we can't keep 'em below

with a Government ship in sight or we shall get into trouble." I therefore accepted their promises of good behaviour; at the same time I pointed out how magnanimous I was, and ordered them to disperse to their several vessels.

Then I went out in the *Mizpah* to the *Siai*, where I found Moreton, R.M., and Judge Winter. The latter had come down to try a white man for murder. Moreton explained to me that there was a lot of sickness in Samarai gaol, beriberi and dysentery, and he wished to fill the *Siai* with yams. As her draught would not permit her to approach closely to the anchorage, he wanted me to act as tender with the *Mizpah*, and load the *Siai*. I jumped at the offer; my whole expenses at this time amounted to £5 a day, and, as Moreton offered me that sum, I was glad for a few days to leave my Malays and the conversation of Billy, for the cabin of the *Siai* and the company of Moreton and Winter. While the *Mizpah* was running yams to the *Siai*, she was steered by one or other of the Malay tenders, and the Judge complimented me upon their polite manners and civility. I grinned an internal grin as I told him they were really not bad people if treated in the right way.

The Trobriands are a great yam-growing district, the yams grown there running up to 150 lbs. in weight. Throughout New Guinea, the group was famous for three things: the cowardice of the men, the immorality—or rather I should put it the total unmorality—of the women, and the quality of its yams. The islands are all perfectly flat and the soil consists of decomposing coral and humus, and is wonderfully rich. One of the staple foods of the islanders consisted of the oyster contained in a small pearl shell, found in great quantities on the mud banks lying in the vicinity of the group, the oyster being termed by the natives "Lapi."

Out of this pearl shell, which, by the way, they opened by throwing it upon the fire, they obtained a large quantity of pearls which they sold to wandering traders; the shell, which would have otherwise have had a very considerable market value, being utterly ruined by the action of the fire.

Here I made the acquaintance of the Rev. — Fellows of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission; a fine type of man who, with his equally devoted wife, was endeavouring to stay, with, as I could see, little hope of success, the rapid deterioration of the Islanders. Mr. Fellows and I gave one another a mutual surprise, I think. I had mentally pictured him as a measly, psalm-singing hypocrite, using religion as a cloak for money-getting; he, I think, had assumed that all traders were drunken, debauched, pyjama-clad ruffians, whose main object in life was to destroy Mission work. Instead of which I found a splendid man, struggling under enormous difficulties, and at great personal sacrifice preaching to the natives a gospel of work and clean living. And he, for his part, discovered that a trader might be a clean-shaved person, who could employ his spare time quite happily in gossiping with the missionary and his wife about people and things far removed from New Guinea.

By the way, some time later Mr. Fellows got me into trouble with Sir William MacGregor, though quite unintentionally. I had relieved Moreton as Resident Magistrate at Samarai, and amongst the correspondence to be dealt with, were a host of complaints from Fellows about robberies by the natives from the Mission House, assaults upon Mission servants and natives, and threats of violence against himself. Moreton said, "Get down and settle this business as soon as you can, Monckton; you may have to burn some powder, but make Fellows safe, for he is a real

good chap, as you know." I went to the Trobriands as soon as I conveniently could; and after seeing Mr. Fellows and questioning the village constable, I came to the conclusion that a certain old chief, living some miles inland, was at the bottom of the trouble. Marching inland, I collared him with several of his satellites, and hauled him to the coast. On being brought before my court the old chief fully confessed, informed me of all the men engaged in the various outrages, sent for them, and begged for mercy; promising amendment and good behaviour in future if forgiven. He then begged Mr. Fellows to intercede with me for them, which Mr. Fellows did. At his request, after I had convicted the men, I discharged them to their homes. About a month later I met Sir William MacGregor and, in the course of conversation about the Trobriands, told him what I had done in the matter of the offences against Mr. Fellows. His Excellency said, "You are like all young magistrates, a fool. Can you not see that, by your action in this case, you have given the natives the impression that the Mission can summon the Government forces, have people sent to gaol, and then have them released? Never in future allow anyone to interfere with a sentence once passed; the Crown alone can pardon; you cannot, neither can the Mission." A remark which I never forgot, and which stood me in good stead in after years.

The greater number of the pearls found at the Trobriand Islands are of a very pale golden or straw colour; and for this reason, though of perfect lustre, are not considered equal to those obtained from the larger mother-of-pearl shell found in the China or Torres Straits, or from Ceylon and West Australia. A certain proportion
the purest

and lustre, are the equals of any pearls in the world. Some few black pearls are found in these islands, but not in any great number. There is a common and erroneous impression amongst people, only acquainted with pearls in jewellers' shops, that black pearls possess a greater value than others. This is not the case. The most valuable pearls are those of a pure white, and perfectly round in shape, suitable for stringing as a necklace; the next a pure white pear-shaped pearl, sufficiently large to be used as a pendant or ear-drop; then come the button-shaped pearls, that is, pearls perfectly round with the exception of a slight flattening on one side, which can be concealed by setting in a bracelet, pin or ring. Black pearls in all these shapes are worth less than the corresponding shapes in white.

Pearls of a freak or fanciful and irregular shape, or fastened together in clusters, possess no commercial value; though in odd cases I have known enormous prices paid for them for sentimental reasons. For instance, a pearl-fisher in Torres Straits found a cluster of small and medium sized pearls in the shape of an almost perfect cross. This cluster, after passing through the hands of several dealers, was eventually sold, I was told, to some wealthy Roman Catholics for presentation to the Pope, the sum paid being £10,000; and the actual value of the pearls composing it, if separate and perfect, would certainly not have been £10. Pearls are sometimes found attached to the pearl shell, or bubbles of the pearly lining of the shell are blown out in such a way as to resemble pearls; these pearls are known as blisters, and are sawn out by the trader and sold for the making of brooches and the cheaper forms of jewellery. When mounted they are frequently passed off to the uninitiated as the real thing.

Large quantities of what are called seed pearls are found in nearly all the different varieties of pearl shell. They are about the size of small shot, and of irregular shape but good colour and lustre; these are mainly sold by the ounce or pound at the rate of from £2 10s. to £3 per ounce. Some of this seed goes to Paris, where it is used, I am told, by milliners for ornamenting ladies' dresses; but by far the greater proportion goes to China, for what purpose I know not. The largest, most valuable and perfect pearls go to either Russia or America, those people valuing pearls apparently more than other races, and being prepared to pay more for really perfect specimens. Pink pearls occur very rarely; in fact, I have never seen one. They are so rare as to have no fixed commercial value, though pearl-fishers say that, when any are found, the Indian Rajahs are always willing to pay enormous prices for them.

The greater portion of black pearls come from the black-lipped variety of shell, a much smaller shell than gold-lipped or mother-of-pearl. The latter shell averages about the size of a large dinner plate, and varies in colour from a pure white at the hinges to a golden colour at the lips. Gold-lip is only obtained in deep water and by means of diving dress; black-lip in shallow water and by naked natives, skin-divers as they are called. Black-lip is of much less value than gold, but, for some reason unknown to me, always jumps tremendously in price during periods of Court Mourning. Gold-lip is subject to attack by a worm, which sometimes bores holes all through the outer covering of the pearly part of the shell.

I believe that the same worm also attacks the spear of the great swordfish. For once, when sailing from the island of St. Aignan to Sudest in a whaleboat in

very calm weather, I noticed a swordfish behaving in a most extraordinary manner. It was travelling at great speed on the surface of the water, sometimes straight forward, sometimes in circles, whilst at intervals it was leaping from the water and whirling rapidly round. I could see no sign of an enemy, but I could plainly see that the fish was in great agony. At last it leapt half a dozen times from the water to a great height, falling each time with a resounding splash, until at last its antics became feebler and it turned on its side and slowly sank. I caused the whaleboat to follow it for some distance, and could see through the clear water the almost dead fish drifting with no sign of external injury about its body anywhere.

My boys then told me that the swordfish frequently behaved in this manner, went "Kava Kava" or mad, and then died. They gave the cause as being a "small snake," that is, a worm, which bored up through its sword into the bone of the skull and thence into the brain. This explanation accounted to me for the numerous well-authenticated cases of swordfish charging and breaking off their swords in ships' hulls. I myself have seen the broken sword fast in the solid keel of a big sailing canoe; and natives have told me instances of the sword being driven through a canoe's planking, and the fish being secured by first lashing the sword fast with cords and then spearing the fish. They too believed that the fish did not attack from malice prepense, but as an accident when driven mad and blind by pain. I have never heard of the swordfish, or its big cousin the sawfish, attacking naked men or clothed diver; though I fail to see how they could withstand or escape from the charge of either. Natives of fishing tribes are not in the least afraid of the swordfish, but they are to a certain extent of the sawfish. The latter has a shorter, broader, and altogether stronger beak

than the former, blunt at the point instead of sharp, and studded down each side by villainous sharp and bony teeth. Its pleasing custom is to charge amongst a shoal of fish and frantically thrash from side to side among them with its beak, gathering up the slain and wounded at its leisure afterwards. This charming habit on its part sometimes leads it to follow a shoal of fish into the fishermen's nets, where, getting its beak entangled, it will tear everything to pieces unless soon speared. The spearing of it is a work of difficulty and danger, as one blow from the violently thrashing beak will disembowel a man, or inflict wounds of a most ghastly nature.

On the same boat trip when I made the acquaintance of the swordfish with worm in his head, I also fell in with a most extraordinary fishing rat. We had landed and camped for the night upon a small coral island surrounded by submerged coral boulders and, but for a few stunted trees, bare of all vegetation. Shortly after dark I was disturbed by rats crawling over me, and at last in disgust went and slept in the whaleboat. In the morning I landed again and, while my boys were preparing breakfast, walked to the other side of the island; then sitting down I began my ante-breakfast pipe, whilst I pondered what on earth the rats on the island could find to live upon, as food there was apparently none. While sitting quietly there, I noticed some rats going down to the edge of the reef—lank, hungry-looking brutes they were, with pink naked tails. I stopped on the point of throwing lumps of coral at them, out of curiosity to see what the vermin meant to do at the sea. Rat after rat picked a flattish lump of coral, squatted on the edge and dangled his tail in the water; suddenly one rat gave a violent leap of about a yard, and as he landed, I saw a crab clinging to his tail. Turning round, the rat grabbed the crab

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and devoured it, and then returned to his stone; the while the other rats were repeating the same performance. What on earth those rats did for fresh water, though, I don't know, as there was none on the island that I could see.

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groping on the bottom with their hands, would not pay expenses. I then tried a new plan. Sending the three luggers to trade for native curios at Kavitari, with the idea that I might again sell them in Samarai, I commenced operations with the dredging apparatus with which I have mentioned the *Mizpah* was fitted. This scheme would have worked well but for two reasons: the first, that the *Mizpah* was old and rotten; the second, that the mud or sandy bottom, on which the pearl oysters lay, was studded with coral mushrooms and boulders.

Our *modus operandi* was this. Working up to windward of the oyster-bearing bank, we used to cast the dredge overboard, and then, clapping on all sail, scud before the wind, dragging the dredge in the mud behind us. At intervals we would heave-to, haul up the dredge with its load of oysters, and repeat the process. Unfortunately, we would haul up about two or three dredge loads, and then, suddenly the dredge would land against a coral lump and bring the vessel to all standing. If the *Mizpah* had been new and strong she might have stood it, but as it was the straining opened her seams and made her leak like a sieve. The result of which was to convince me that unless I abandoned my dredging, I should have no *Mizpah* left under me. Some years afterwards my plan was attempted by a trader with several stoutly-built vessels; but an Ordinance was passed by the New Guinea Legislative Council forbidding the fishing for the Trobriand species or pearl shell by means of dredging, for fear of clearing out the breeding ground of the oyster and thus destroying one of the staple foods of the natives.

Upon this last failure, I summoned Billy and the luggers and we stood away for the Straits between Ferguson and Normanby Islands. Here, however,

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though we obtained a small quantity of shell of class quality, unusually large and clean, the water was so deep—twenty-three to twenty-five fathoms. I did not care to continue working there. I made the acquaintance of a great friend of Mr. the Rev. William Bromilow of the Wesleyan Mission; a splendid type of man and missionary, whose friendship I was to enjoy for many years. The Mission Station is built on the island of Dobu, an active volcano; the only evidence of volcanic action at the time being a hot spring bubbling up in the sea, in which small vessels used to anchor, to allow the water to boil the barnacles and weeds off their bottoms. The native yam gardens run right up and into the old crater of the volcano. Here the natives have a curious way of fishing, using kites which they throw from their canoes. The kites have long strings descending from them, ending in a bunch of tough spider web. The cobweb dancing over the surface of the water attracts the fish, which, snapping at it, get their teeth entangled in its tough texture and are then upon secured by a man or small boy swimming alongside the canoe.

I found at Dobu my old Chasseurs d'Afrique, Louis, settled down on a small island as a copra dealer and trader. He told me that he was utterly tired of knocking about and had settled there to end his life; he was making about £5 per week at his business, and had got together a fine collection of pigs and poultry. Louis' days were to end, poor devil, sooner than was expected; but that is later. He had a small fleet of canoes, which he sent out daily to buy cocoanuts from the natives, giving them trade tobacco; he then manufactured the kernels into copra. When the natives' supply failed, he dynamited fish and traded them instead of tobacco for cocoanuts; when their fishing was

and he had no demand for the catch, he salted and dried it and then disposed of it at native feast times. Louis begged me to join him, and settle down to a lotus-eating and untroubled life with enough for our wants, and no danger and worry. He said, "We will order a good cutter for our trading, have plenty of papers, books, tobacco, and wine of the best, and when I die, you can take the business." "That's all very fine, Louis," I said; "but how old are you?" "Fifty-seven," replied Louis. "Well and good," I remarked, "but you are over thirty years ahead of me; your life has been lived, while mine has just begun! What would you have said thirty odd years ago, when you were a young soldier, if a similar proposition had been made to you?" "I should have said, God damn! not I!" said Louis. "Well, Louis," I replied, "I am afraid that must be my answer to you now." The time came when I weighed anchor and left Dobu, taking, as a parting present from Louis, a large native pot full of eggs, a dozen clucking fowls, a squealing porker for my crew, and a most ornate French tie-pin, which someone in Samarai afterwards stole. Poor Louis! the next time I met him was in the hospital at Thursday Island, he having blown off his fore-arm in dynamiting fish. He had been taken to Samarai in the Mission vessel and from there sent on to Thursday Island in the *Merrie England*.

From Dobu we sailed south and rounded Normanby Island, finding everywhere, in likely pearl-shell localities, shell of a size and quality better than any other in the world, but water too deep for us to work it successfully. The shell always lay at a depth varying from twenty-eight to thirty fathoms; a depth that, however tempting the outlook, simply spelt suicide on the part of the diver volunteering to work it, and manslaughter on the part of the owner sending him

George Le Hunte, summed it up in these words: "An admirable place for exploration by steam launch, slowly, however, filling up by deposit of mud from rivers." With all due respect for vice-regal sapience, I beg now to remark that—Firstly, there are no rivers flowing into Pusa Pusa Harbour; secondly, the bottom consists of coral sand and is subject to great scour; and thirdly, the value of a harbour lies in its safety for shipping and not in its suitability for a scenic or picnic resort. Pusa Pusa is the only harbour existing between China Straits and Cape Nelson where ships of large tonnage can lie in safety. Its entrance is masked by islands, hence ships by the dozen may sail past without having any idea of what lies behind them; only a prowling pearl-hunting vessel such as mine was likely to nose her way into the entrance.

As we sailed in we came suddenly upon a few natives camped upon the beach of a small island, with whom—after a little difficulty—we established trading relations, and from whom I purchased several fine specimens of gold-lip shell, which they told me they had found washed up on the beach. In this place every indication pointed to shell: namely, strong tidal scours in narrow passages, sandy coral-studded bottom and quantities of the submarine plant, which divers maintain grows only where pearl shell is to be found.

From Pusa Pusa we fled back as fast as sail could drive us to Iasa Iasi to fetch the luggers, only to find that they were still incapable of moving—much less working. During the absence of the *Mizpah*, a wandering pearl-fishing lugger, owned by a man called Silva, had joined them, he having come to discover what we were doing. Finding my own boats *hors de combat*, I told Silva of my discovery of Pusa Pusa and asked him to come and prospect the harbour, suggesting that, if we found anything worth having, we should

work it together and keep its discovery secret. Silva protested for some time, saying that he did not like the north-east coast at all, and had only come to the point at which we were then lying in the hope of discovering what my boats were doing; he finally, however, consented to venture into Pusa Pusa providing the *Mizpah* went with him. Accordingly the *Mizpah* and Silva's $\frac{1}{2}$ lugger sailed for that harbour, while the *Ada*, *Hornet*, and *Curlew* remained at Iasi awaiting the convalescence of their crews or further orders from me.

On arrival at Pusa Pusa, Silva donned the diving dress and descended, only to ascend in about ten minutes, holding a large shell in his hand and gesticulating to have his helmet removed. He said that it was a good shell bottom, promising very well indeed, but that immediately on descending he had met a groper larger than any he had ever seen, and he would prefer to remain on deck until the fish had had time to remove itself. Half an hour elapsed, Silva descended again, and almost immediately signalled, "Pull me up." Pulled up accordingly he was; he then complained that he had met a shark, and that—though as a general rule he did not mind sharks—this particular one was longer than the *Mizpah*, and he thought he preferred to be on deck! Again we waited perhaps an hour, and again Silva descended, and again came the urgent signal, "Pull me up." Upon his helmet being removed, he at once demanded, with many oaths, that his whole dress should be taken off; and then, seizing a tomahawk, he declaimed: "The first time I went down in this blank place I met a groper, the next time I met a shark as big as a ship, the last time there was a — alligator, and if any man likes to say there is shell here I'll knock his — brain
A hero of romance would

and descended, but I freely confess that I—as an amateur—was not game to take on a work that a professional diver threw up as too dangerous.

Doubtless Silva's rage was increased by the extraordinary effect air pressure has upon a man's temper when diving. A diver may be in a perfectly amiable mood with all the world while the dress is being fitted on, but the moment the face glass is screwed home—the signal for starting the air pump—he begins to feel a little grievance or irritation; as he descends, this feeling increases until he is in a perfect fury of rage against every one in general and usually one individual in particular. After that, he spends his time in wondering how soon the dress can be taken off in order that he may half-kill that particular person, usually the tender, for some wholly imaginary offence. Another peculiar fact is, that the moment the face glass is removed and he breathes the ordinary air—even though he may have come up boiling with rage against some special individual—the bad temper evaporates like magic and he wonders what on earth caused his anger. This has invariably been my experience, and other divers have told me they have felt the same sensations. There is usually a perpetual feud between the diver on the bottom and the men on deck working the air pump. The diver always wants sufficient air to keep his dress distended and also to keep himself bobbing about on the bottom; if he gets too much he can let it pass away, by releasing the valve of his helmet; if he gets too little, he can signal for more, but there is no tug signal on the life-line for less air.

A diver's helmet is really not a helmet in the ordinary acceptation of the term, but is a small air chamber firmly bolted to the corselet and incapable of movement from any volition on his part. He simply turns his head inside it and looks through either side or

front glasses, exactly as a man looks through a window. A diver's most real danger is probably the risk he runs of being drowned when on his way to the surface, and it occurs in this way. After a time the best of diving dresses becomes leaky to a more or less extent, and the water that finds its way through, settles about the feet and legs. Divers become quite accustomed to having their dresses filled with water up to the knees and even to the thigh; the water is no inconvenience to them whilst upright on the bottom, and they are very rarely conscious of it. Well, suppose a diver has his dress full of water to the knees or thighs; as he ascends, he may involuntarily or by accident allow his body to assume a horizontal position, in which case the water at once rushes into the helmet, overbalances him, *i.e.* really stands him on his head, and drowns him inside his dress.

In a diving dress every beat of the air pump is perfectly audible to the diver, and any irregularity or alteration of the pace, at which the air-pump wheels are turned, is to him irritating in the extreme—an irritation he invariably works off by signalling for more air and thus increasing the manual labour at the pumps. It takes four men, straining hard, to keep a diver properly supplied with air at any depth over twenty fathoms. One of the greatest discomforts a diver has in the tropics is the smell of warm oil, more or less rancid, with which the pumps charge his air; I have had to struggle hard to prevent being sick, and I leave to the imagination the beastly situation of a man, with his head confined in a small helmet, overcome by nausea! Another exasperating thing is the scroop made by a grain of sand or grit getting into the plunger of the air pump, which is only comparable to the feeling caused by a drop of water on one's head at regular intervals.

Apart from the noise of the pump beats, communicated through the air pipe—which, by the way, is rather comforting, as it shows one is not completely cut off from the upper world—the under seas seem absorbed in extreme silence and gloom, and unless one is in a current or tide, in a sort of unholy calm. One of the things which appear as most remarkable is the lessening of the weight of objects in the water; for instance, a fully accoutred diver can hardly waddle on the deck of his ship, but as he descends, his weight seems to become less and less until he can bob about in a fairy-like manner on the bottom. The same lessening of weight applies equally to inanimate objects; and it is a common trick, when competing vessels are working upon a small patch of shell, for the diver of one of them to pull his rival's anchor out of the ground and tangle its anchor round the fluke, with the result that the vessel drifts off with the tide or the wind, towing her diver after her. A lot of time is thus wasted in pulling him up and working back against tide or wind to her old station.

I have spoken of pulling up a diver; this is not literally true, as a diver really ascends of his own volition, by closing his helmet's air valve and thus blowing out his dress with air. The "pulling in," when the water is calm, merely consists of taking up the slack of the air pipe and line, and, when there is a tide or current, of hauling him along the surface to his vessel. Great care has to be exercised by him in coming to the surface, as, should his ascent be too fast, he may smash his helmet on the bottom of his boat or lugger. The usual way is in a half-lying position on the back and with one hand on the air valve, watching carefully for the light near the surface, and for the shadow of the vessel's hull. Occasionally, though it very rarely happens, a diver's air valve sticks; in which case, he

at first rises slowly from the bottom, but as the pressure of the water decreases, the pace of his ascent increases, until at last he is rising at such a pace that he shoots violently above the surface. The first thing that shows those on board the lugger what is happening is a splash, and the sight of the diver floundering about on the surface nearly suffocated by pressure of air.

From Pusa Pusa, the *Mizpah* and Silva's boat returned to Iasa Iasi; and when I had rejoined my luggers, Silva sailed away for Sudest, being by this time quite convinced that nothing was to be gained by shadowing my boats. I found that my crews were at last recovering, and departed with them for the islands of Tubi Tubi and Basilaki. On the way we called in at Awaiama Bay on the coast of the mainland, in order to replenish our fresh-water supply, the water obtainable at Cape Vogel being brackish and disagreeable to the taste. Here I found Moreton with the *Siai*; he was engaged in buying land from the natives for a man named Oates. New Guinea law did not permit the sale of land by natives to any other than the Crown; the Crown could then transfer to the European applicant. Oates had come up from Sydney in a cutter of some twenty tons burthen, accompanied by his wife and family, which consisted of a son and daughter, aged respectively about fourteen and seventeen, their intention being to start a cocoanut plantation. He had formerly been the master of the *Albert McLaren*, the Anglican Mission vessel; but this latest speculation of his was not fated to turn out well. The first thing that happened was that his daughter became disgusted with the prospect, and, on the family visiting Samarai, she took the first opportunity of departing for Sydney, where, I believe, she found life happier. Then his wife died and wa

himself was delirious at the time with malarial fever and all the native servants had fled. Finally Oates died also, and the unhappy boy had to bury him as well. This boy, Ernest Oates, afterwards entered the service of Whitten Brothers and eventually became manager of their branch at Buna Bay, and he was still in that position when I finally left New Guinea. After a most strenuous ten years, he was endeavouring to scrape together enough money to start a small business of his own in Sydney—something quiet and contemplative, like growing mushrooms.

I remember, some years after the death of his parents, an extraordinary performance on the part of this lad. He was then stationed by Whitten Brothers at the mouth of the Kumusi River as their agent, and had charge of a receiving store for goods landed at that port, which had to be sent up the river to Bogi, a mining camp. With the exception of a few Samarai boys, Ernest Oates was absolutely alone, living surrounded by some thousands of particularly dangerous natives. He possessed two fire-arms, one, a Winchester repeating rifle, for which he had a large store of cartridges; the other, an old Snider with only some half-dozen charges. By some means or other, he broke the lock of his Winchester, and therefore was left with the weapon for which he had practically no ammunition. At this time a large alligator collared several pigs from near the store and narrowly missed securing odd boys of his. Whilst Oates was sitting on his verandah one evening he noticed the alligator crawl out on a mud bank and, with its mouth wide open, proceed to go to sleep. As he did not wish to use one of his sparse supply of cartridges, the idea occurred to him of creeping over the mud and throwing a dynamite cartridge down the reptile's throat. No sooner did the thought come than it was acted upon; crawling over the

mud he got, unperceived, to within a few feet of the saurian and, standing up, hurled his cartridge. Unfortunately, as he threw the explosive, his feet burst through the hard, sun-baked crust of mud, and he sank to the waist with a plop and a yell; his boys, who were keenly interested spectators, dashed to his assistance, but with little hope of reaching him before the alligator. Luckily, however, he had attached a very short fuse to his charge, and the dynamite exploded, wounding the reptile's tail and causing it to turn round and snap at an imaginary new enemy. This allowed Oates' boys to come up, drag him from his hole, and drive off the alligator with their spears.

Oates' father, "Captain" Oates, as he was usually called, once gave me the peculiar pleasure—as a magistrate—of receiving a complaint about myself. I was relieving Moreton at the time as Resident Magistrate at Samarai, and had been engaged, to the common knowledge of all traders and labour recruiters, in a punitive expedition to Goodenough Island. Having finished my work there, I took the *Siai* across to Cape Vogel with the intention of searching for unsigned or kidnapped boys, by running unseen down the coast in the night and boarding any labour vessels I might find bound for the Mambare gold-fields, either rounding or anchored off East Cape. Labour vessels had a trick of starting their little games when the cat in the shape of the *Siai*—or *Black Maria*, as their owners called her—was safely out of the way.

It was a rough, boisterous night, dark as the inside of a black cow, and blowing nearly a full gale; the *Siai* was showing no lights, as I did not want her seen, nor did I want her movements reported by the natives; and as she was crowded with men, I could afford to carry on sail until the last minute, which I accordingly did. Passing Awaiama we sighted the lights of a

vessel hove-to outside the harbour, and, as we ran close down to her, there came a brilliant flash of lightning from behind us, which for a moment illuminated her like day, and allowed us to identify her as Oates' cutter, the *Rock Lily*; whereupon we sheered off and passed her at about sixty feet distance. At East Cape I found no vessels, and accordingly went on into Samarai.

Two days later Oates arrived and, coming into the Court House, told me he had a complaint to make about a strange ship. "Two nights ago," said he, "I was hove-to off Awaiama: the night was dark and the weather so rough that I did not care to move either towards Samarai or back into the harbour. My lights were burning well, when suddenly there came a flash of lightning, and by it I saw a black schooner; I could see thirty feet of her keel out of water, your worship, and she was then setting a topsail! It's the mercy of God I was not run down; she had no lights, and I want her found and her captain fined." I sympathized greatly with Oates, and sent to the Subcollector of Customs for a list of vessels which had entered the harbour during the past two days; naturally the officer never dreamt of including the Government vessel in the list, for, in the first instance, her movements did not concern him, and, in the second, he knew that as she carried me, I must know as much or more about her than he did. Oates scanned the list of luggers, cutters, and Mission boats, but there was no black schooner of the description he gave. "Captain Oates," I said, "are you certain it was not a nightmare you had?" Oates choked with indignation. "She was four times the size of any vessel on this coast; my whole crew saw her and got the fright of their lives. Devil, even a binnacle light she carried." "Very good, Captain Oates," I said; "you see we can get no information

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For I had heard of this Calhoun Craford, a tough guy who hated colored people. Joe said, "Every guy in that outfit who's married to a Japanese girl goes through hell with this bastard Craford."

Katsumi, aware that Joe's trouble had been caused by her, now left the charcoal brazier and came into the middle of the room. She pushed Joe down onto a pillow and took off his shoes. "You not to come on tatami with shoes, Joe," she said softly. She brought him a tiny cup of hot sake wine and when he had drunk this she led him into the other room where there was a Japanese bath and soon I could hear tensed up little Joe Kelly, the dead-end kid, sloshing about in the tub while his patient wife soused him with cold water and rubbed his back. After a while they joined me and Joe scratched himself under the dark blue kimono Katsumi had made him. He said, "To hell with Colonel Craford. Look what I got!" And he produced a bottle of Italian wine which Katsumi took.

Then, as we heard the soft click of zori on the alley stones, we all fell silent and I think Joe and Katsumi were as excited as I, although their hearts couldn't have been pounding as hard. The paper doors slid back and there was Hana-ogi in a green-and-gold kimono, her lips slightly parted in a smile, her brilliant eyes glowing from her night walk and her jet black hair mussed by the wind that blew along the canal. She started to speak but I caught her in my arms and kissed her. This time we closed our eyes, but when we finally drew apart—for she was kissing me too—she passed the back of her hand across her forehead and I think she knew then that for a girl dedicated to Takarazuka and a man dedicated to American military life love could result only in tragedy, and she pushed my hand away from hers and gently removed her zori and sat down on the tatami and spoke quietly to Katsumi, who spoke to Joe in Japanese, and all three of them fumbled around, not knowing how to translate what Hana-ogi had said, so she held out her hand to me and invited me to sit upon the mats beside her, and finally Katsumi said, "She not mad no more."

After dinner Katsumi said, "Joe, we take walk." Hana-ogi did not protest and as soon as the fragile doors slid shut I took her in my arms.

We sat upon the mats unable to say a word. I put my finger on her wonderful face and said, "Nice," but she could not understand. She gave me some instructions in Japanese but all I could do was shrug my shoulders, so she laughed and grabbed my big toe and pulled my cramped legs out straight and patted my knees, indicating that I must be stiff from sitting Japanese style. Then she made a pillow for my head in her lap and in that way we continued our meaningless conversation on the tatamis.

It was apparent to each of us that we would meet many times, but that when she passed me on the Bitchi-bashi she would look straight ahead and it was also apparent that she intended us to be lovers—but not on this first quiet night—and that as the days went by we would postpone one decision after another until finally some external force, say Takarazuka or General Webster, intervened to make the climactic decisions for us, but as she looked down at me with calm eyes, as her wonderful hands held my face and as her slim, graceful legs stretched out at last beside mine on the tatami mats, one question at least was answered. I had often wondered how a self-respecting American could get excited about a Japanese girl. Now I knew.

When it came time to leave, Hana-ogi refused to be seen with me on the street and caught a train back to Takarazuka. Joe drove me over to Itami, where I took the bus to Takarazuka, but something must have delayed Hana-ogi's train, because when I got to my room and looked out at the Bitchi-bashi, there was Hana-ogi crossing it in the April moonlight. I rushed down to speak with her but she passed proudly by, her cream-colored zori going pin-toed along the railroad track to her dormitory.

I didn't sleep much that night because when I got back to my room I found a letter which had been delivered by special messenger. It contained a routine reminder

of recent orders issued by Camp Kobe and along the foot in capital letters I read: ANY PUBLIC DISPLAY WHATSOEVER OF AFFECTION FOR A JAPANESE NATIONAL BY A MEMBER OF THIS COMMAND IS FORBIDDEN. OFFICERS SHOULD NOT EVEN APPEAR ON PUBLIC STREETS ACCOMPANIED BY WOMEN OF THE INDIGENOUS PERSONNEL.

I knew that I was entangled in a ridiculous situation, for I could not walk with Hana-ogi in the city and she could not walk with me in town. If General Webster caught me dating a Japanese girl I would be disciplined and if the Takarazuka people heard of Hana-ogi dating an American she would be fired from the Moon Troupe. It seemed like something borrowed from the play I was in at St. Leonard's. Then I was a prince trying to prevent my niece from marrying a penniless schoolteacher. The kid who played the schoolteacher was a miserable drip in real life and I remember that on-stage I became pretty outraged, but now it was happening to me, and Mrs. Webster riding herd on me and the Takarazuka railroad company protecting their investment in Hana-ogi were going to be a lot tougher than a Ruritanian prince played by seventeen-year-old Lloyd Gruver.

For about two hours that morning as I lay awake—from three to five—I decided the whole affair was too damned silly, but toward dawn I began to see Hana-ogi dancing along the wall of my room and her classical postures, the stamping of her feet and the gestures of her right hand allured me so that I could think only of her tight and disciplined body. My thoughts were filled with the grace of her movement and as the sun rose I fell asleep knowing that somewhere within the triangle of the three cities we would meet.

OLD FARMER: "Each drop of fertilizer I place against the stalk of the plant by hand—not to waste any."

It came unexpectedly. On a warm day in May I waited for Hana-ogi at the Bitchi-bashi but she did not appear and disconsolately I wandered down to the railroad station to purchase a ticket back to Itami, but as I approached the cage I saw Hana-ogi standing off to one side, holding a ticket in her hand and impulsively, even though we were in the heart of Takarazuka, she came to me and we went to the ticket cage together and we bought two tickets for a small town at the end of the line, and on this lovely day we walked for the first time through the ancient Japanese countryside.

Hana-ogi, unable to speak a phrase of English, and I quite as dumb in Japanese, walked along the rice fields and across the little ridges that ran like miniature footpaths beside the irrigation ditches. We nodded to old women working the fields, laughed at children, and watched the white birds flying. Hana-ogi wore her green and white kimono and her cream zori and she was a bird herself, the May wind catching at her loose garments and the branches of trees tousling her delicate hair.

Wherever we went the land was crowded. Where in Texas there would be one farmer here there were forty. Where the footpaths in New Hampshire might be crowded with three people, here it was overwhelmed with fifty. There were no vacant fields, no woodlots, no mossy banks beside the wandering streams. On every foot of land were people and no matter how far we walked into the countryside there were always more people. More than any day I ever lived in my life I treasure this day because I discovered not only Hana-ogi's enormous love but I also discovered her land, the tragic, doomed

d of Japan, and from it I learned the fundamental defect of her country: too many people.

In Korea we used to joke about enlisted men who might buy Japanese girls of sixteen or seventeen—a man could buy a young girl anywhere in Japan—and we thought it a horrible reflection on Japan, but today I know that it would always be possible to find some Japanese farmer who would be eager to sell his daughter to a kind man, for if she stayed at home and had to fight for her share of the skimpy rice in the family bowl she could never do as well as if she went off with a man who would buy rice for her. All the problems we used to laugh about as being so strange—so unlike America—I saw explained this afternoon. The Japanese were no different from us. Their farmers loved their daughters exactly as Iowa farmers love theirs. But there was not enough land. There was never enough food.

I thank God for that May evening walking among the rice fields while the crickets droned at us, for if I had not seen this one particular old man tending his field I am sure that when I finally learned the terrifying truth about Hana-ogi I could no longer have loved her; but having seen this old man and his particles of soil I loved her the more.

He stood where a trail turned off from the main road, leaving in the joint a thin sliver of useless land that in America would have been allowed to grow up in burdock. In Japan this tragic triangle was a man's field, the subsistence of one man's large family. On this May night he was bent over the field, digging it to a depth of fourteen inches. The dug soil he placed reverently to one side until his tiny field was excavated. Then, as we watched, he took each handful of soil and gently pulverized it, allowing it to return to its bed. Pebbles he tossed aside and sticks and foreign things, and in the two days that followed this man would finger each item of his soil. Not for him a plow or a harrow, but the gnarled fingers and the bending back.

It is difficult for me to report these things for I cannot

explain how Hana-ogi explained them to me. By pointing, by gesturing, by little pantomimes with the old man she explained that he was like her father except that her father's field—before the American bombs killed him—was slightly bigger. But her father had nine children.

It was breathlessly apparent to us as the sun sank below the distant hills that in terribly crowded Japan Hana-ogi and I were seeking a place in which to make love. There was now no thought of Japanese or American. We were timeless human beings without nation or speech or different color. I now understood the answer to the second question that had perplexed me in Korea: "How can an American who fought the Japs actually go to bed with a Jap girl?" The answer was so simple. Nearly a half million of our men had found the simple answer. You find a girl as lovely as Hana-ogi—and she is not Japanese and you are not American.

As we walked into the twilight we drew closer together. She took my hand and also took my heart and as dusk fell over us we searched more urgently from side to side. We were no more looking at the white birds or the old men bending over their fields. We were looking for a refuge—any kind of refuge—for we were desperately in love.

I remember that once I thought I saw a grove of trees, but they were houses, for random trees were not allowed to grow in Japan. Again Hana-ogi pointed to a barn, but it was occupied. In Japan there was not even spare land for love.

But at last we came to a structure that was familiar to me, two inclined massive poles with two more set across them at the top like an enormous capital A, flat at the point. It was the timeless symbol of a Shinto shrine and here there were trees, but as always there were people too. We watched them come through the towering A, stand silently before the shrine, clap their hands three times, bow and depart, the torn white paper and the rice ropes of their religion fluttering quietly in the wind above them.

Hana-ogi took my hand and led me past the shrine until we came to a grassy bank partially protected by our trees. Villagers passed ten feet from us and dogs barked nearby. Across the mound we could see the dim lights of houses, for there was no empty countryside as I had known it in America. There was no place where there were not people. But at last we had to ignore them and it seemed to me as I sank beside Hana-ogi in the May twilight that we were being watched by the million eyes of Japan.

I remember vividly two things that happened. I had no conception of a kimono and thought it a kind of wrap-around dress but when we embraced and it was clear that Hana-ogi intended that we love completely, I tried to undo this gossamer dress, but it led to another and then another and to still more and although we could not speak we fell to laughing at my astonishment. Then suddenly we laughed no more, for I was faced with the second vast occurrence of the day, for when in the fading light I at last saw Hana-ogi's exquisite body I realized with shock—even though I was prepared to accept it—that I was with a girl of Asia. I was with a girl whose complete body was golden and not white and there was a terrible moment of fear and I think Hana-ogi shared this fear, for she caught my white arm and held it across her golden breasts and studied it and looked away and then as quickly caught me to her whole heart and accepted the white man from America.

We returned at last to Takarazuka and as we approached that lovely place we went into separate cars and I waited long till Hana-ogi had disappeared across the Bitchi-bashi before I appeared on the streets, heading for the Marine Barracks. Mike Bailey was in the shower and when he heard me go by he yelled and brought me back to military life with a fearful bang.

He said, "Mrs. Webster saw me in Kobe today and asked me a lot of questions."

"About you and Fumi-chan?" I asked, nonchalantly.

"Don't play coy, son. About you and Eileen."

"What'd'j tell her?"

"It isn't so much what I told her as what she asked." He waited for me to press the point, but I called downstairs for some cold beer and he said, "She asked me if you were going with a Japanese girl."

I sort of gulped on my beer and Mike said promptly, "Of course I said no. You aren't, are you?"

I took another drink of beer and pondered a long time what I ought to say. Then the pressing desire to talk with someone overcame me and I said, "I've been walking with Hana-ogi. We must have walked for five miles and I'm so deep in love . . ."

Mike was a fine character to talk with at a time like this. He laughed and said, "I feel like a traitor, Ace, getting you into this. Hell, I'm the one who's supposed to be in love."

I said, "It hit me like a propeller zinging around when you aren't looking. Jesus, Mike, I tell you the truth, I'm desperate."

Mike laughed again and said, "No need for a guy to be desperate in Japan. If you can't cuddle up to Hana-ogi because she's an actress, there's always the Tiger of Takarazuka. Better men than you . . ."

I started to say boldly, "But we . . ." My voice trailed off and I ended lamely, "The stars came right down and knocked me out."

Mike looked at me quizzically, then said without joking, "Look, Ace, I know better than most men around here how sweet a Japanese girl can be. But don't get involved. For the love of God, Ace, don't get involved."

"I am involved."

"Mrs. Webster said the M.P.'s have instructions to pick up officers seen holding hands with indigenous personnel. That's a lovely phrase, isn't it?"

"I just don't give a damn, Mike. To hell with the M.P.'s and to hell with Mrs. Webster."

"I agree with you, Ace. But while I was talking with the general's main tank division her daughter came up

"I got a good look. For Christ sake, Ace, that girl's a win' beauty. Why do you have to mess around with a Japanese actress if this Eileen is on tap?"

I put the beer down and stared at the floor. That was the question I had not wanted Mike to ask. I saw Eileen as I had known her at Vassar, bright, eager, a wonderful sport. I saw her that winter in Texas when her father was colonel at San Antonio and I was at Randolph Field. Why hadn't I married her then? Why had she turned down the other young officers and insisted upon waiting for me? I felt like the announcer who asks the burning questions at the end of each radio program about breaking hearts, but I knew that you could turn my radio on the next day and still not get the answers.

I looked up at Mike and said, "I don't know."

He asked me directly, "Are you afraid of American women?"

I said, "I hadn't thought of it."

He said, "I've been over here a long time, what with one thing and another. I've watched lots of our men go for these Japanese girls . . . Hell, I won't be superior about it. I do myself. Frankly and all kidding aside, Ace, I'd a damned sight rather marry Fumiko-san than Eileen. But I just wondered why you felt that way?"

"I don't feel that way. At least if I do I don't know about it. But why do you?"

"With me it's very clear. One thing explains it all. You ever had your back scrubbed by a Japanese girl? Not a bath attendant mind you. That's simple. But a girl who really loved you?"

"What's back scrubbing got to do with it?"

"Ace, either you understand or you don't."

"What are you driving at?"

"I'm trying to say there are hundreds of ways for men and women to get along together. Some of the ways work in Turkey, some work in China. In America we've constructed our own ways. What I'm saying is that of them all I prefer the Japanese way." He laughed and saw that I

didn't entirely understand, so he banged his beer down and shouted, "All right! One easy question! Can you imagine Eileen Webster scrubbing your back?"

It was a crazy question, a truly hellish shot in the dark, but I could immediately visualize fat little Katsumi Kelly the other night, taking her sore and defeated husband into the bath and knocking the back of his neck and getting him his kimono and quietly reassuring him that her love was more important than whatever Lt.Col. Calhoun Craford had done to him, and I saw runty, sawed-off Joe Kelly coming back to life as a complete man and I had great fear—like Mike Bailey—that Eileen Webster would not be able or willing to do that for her man. Oh, she would be glad to storm in and fight it out with Lt.Col. Craford, or she would take a job and help me earn enough so that I could tell Lt.Col. Craford to go to hell, or she could do a million other capable things; but I did not think she could take a wounded man and make him whole, for my mother in thirty years of married life had never once, so far as I knew, done for my father the simple healing act that Katsumi Kelly had done for her man the other night.

Mike said it for me. He laughed and said, "There are all kinds of things wrong with Japan. But Japanese women aren't one of them and their view of love suits me fine." Then he added, "But I hate to see you be the one to take it all seriously. Because the Air Force would never let you marry a Japanese girl . . ."

"What would the Air Force have to do about it?"

"You'd see. You're one of their bright young men and they'd bring all sorts of pressures to bear . . ."

"Who's talking about marriage?"

Mike sighed. "That's better. They way you started, you were talking about marriage."

"I said I was confused."

"I'd be confused too if I was involved with two women like Eileen and Hana-ogi." He grew thoughtful and added, "It's very strange. I'd never have picked Hana-ogi."

She's always so mannish. Come to think of it, I've never seen her in girl's clothes. Have you?"

I thought of her rare charm and started to speak reverently but this scared Mike and he said, "Ace, I know damn well you're thinking about marriage and it's going to be tough. Son, it's going to be tough."

I insisted that I didn't know what I was thinking about, but my problem was solved for me in an unforeseen manner. Katsumi and Joe dropped by the air base the next afternoon and Katsumi took care of everything. Haltingly she said, "We have find house for you, Ace."

"A house!" I drew her toward a wall where no one could listen.

"Yes, one small house."

"What do I want with a house?"

"Where else you and Hana-ogi-san stay?"

"Wait a . . ."

"You not love Hana-ogi?"

"Sure I love her, but . . ." I appealed to Joe, who grinned and said, "When a Japanese girl loves you, Ace, it's solid. How you suppose I got my house?"

I said to them, "Hana-ogi could get into trouble . . ."

Katsumi looked at me incredulously and said, "When Hana-ogi come our house to see you it mean she love you. When she walk to Shinto shrine it mean same thing. Where you two make love? Here at Itami? I don't think so. (She pronounced it, "I don' sink so.") Officers Club Kobe? I don't think so. Takarazuka? No!"

I was about to call the whole affair off when Katsumi handed me a map showing that the house was not far from hers. Then she said, gravely, "Today Hana-ogi-san number one girl at Takarazuka. She work very hard for this. You be good man not tell anyone you love Hana-ogi. She make very dangerous come Osaka for you."

"If it's so dangerous . . ."

"But she tell me all time she work hard she think some day she meet . . ." Katsumi blushed and could not continue, so I waited until she gained courage, whereupon

she whispered, "Hana-ogi tall girl. Not little fat girl same me. Long time she dream she meet tall man—same you."

I must have shown my disappointment at being chosen because I was six-feet-two, so Katsumi said, "She meet many tall men but no one brave like you—no one brave to stand at bridge many times to see her." That was Katsumi's speech and as she left she said, "Hana-ogi come your new house tonight seven o'clock."

I was now overboard in the slipstream where things happen so fast you never get your parachute open. I was tumbling about and all thought of General Webster's orders, my promotion in service and my early ideas about the Japanese enemy were swirling in confusion. But of one thing I was determined. I would go to that house in Osaka early in the afternoon and I would clean it and I would stock the shelves with food and I would make it a home.

But at three-thirty I was called into an urgent meeting and it was nearly seven when I reached Osaka. I hurried up the main street to where my canal ran off to the right and I passed along the narrow footpath until I came to a little store, where I bought an armful of things to eat. Then I took a deep breath and walked out into the May twilight.

As I approached my house I saw that the sliding doors were open and from them came a bright light and a sight I shall never forget: a tiny cloud of dust followed by the merest flick of a broom. Hana-ogi had hurried to the new house to clean it for my arrival.

I dashed into the room, threw the food on the floor and took her in my arms. I kissed her wildly and pressed her golden cheek next to mine, but instead of the flood of kisses I anticipated she pushed me away, pointed to my shoes and cried, "Oh, Rroyd-san!" For a moment I was bewildered and then she knelt down and started to untie my offending shoes. Quickly I prevented her from doing this, so she picked up the food I had dropped and when she placed it on the shelf I saw that with her own money she had already stocked the kitchen.

There was a pot cooking over the brazier and I looked in, then turned quickly to find Hana-ogi cleaning my shoes and placing them in the corner. I took three steps, lifted her away from my shoes and carried her into the middle of the room, where I stood looking about me helplessly till Hana-ogi laughed and with her expressive head indicated a closet which I kicked open, releasing the bed roll. I spread it as well as I could with my feet and gently placed Hana-ogi upon it. She closed her slanted eyes for a moment, then looked up and smiled, pulling me down beside her.

In the days that followed I often recalled the stories I had read about American and English sailors who had fallen in love with island girls and of how idyllic it was. But these damnable stories invariably ended with the big kiss and it had not occurred to me that after the big kiss these island lovers must have had things they wanted to talk about. But how did they talk without any language? How in hell did they talk?

I do not think that those who have always stayed at home can understand how terrible a thing language is, how dependent we are upon it. During the tremendous weeks that followed when May flowers bloomed along our canal there were times when I almost tore at my throat trying to find some way to express an emotion to Hana-ogi. It's all right to gesture at a girl's eyes and indicate that they are lovely but if you feel your heart expand at the very sound of her quiet approach along the canal—if you feel the earth tremble at night when she brings your soft pillow to the bed roll while beside it she places her canvas pillow filled with rice bran—then you feel that you must speak to her or perish.

I knew exactly four Japanese phrases. *Ich i ban* meant *number one* and I used this interminably. When I first saw Hana-ogi undressed I gasped at her amazing beauty and cried, "Ich i ban!" When she cooked a good meal it was "Ich i ban." When she saw President Truman's picture in the paper I said, "America ich i ban." And once when she suggested that her breasts were too small I protested, "Ich i ban! Ich i ban!"

I also knew *Domo arigato gozaimasu*, which meant *thank you*. I used it all the time and it was curious how this phrase of courtesy came to mean so much to us. We

were deeply indebted to each other, for we had undertaken unusual risks, so there was an extra tender about all we did. When I spread the bed roll I would "Dom' arigato" but more often I used the full phrase. I was in a land of courtesy where great courtesy had been extended me.

Of course I knew the universal Japanese words *taki* and *sukoshi* for *much* and *little*. Every American in Japan used these words as his final comment upon an infinitesimal subject. The words look strange to me as I write them for in Japanese the letter *u* is not pronounced in combination with *k* and it was *taksan* this and *skoshi* that just as *was* *Ta-ka-raz-ka* and *skiyaki* rather than *sukiyaki*. I remember once when I was moved to great depths by something Hana-ogi had done and I pointed to my head and put her golden hand above it and cried, "Takusan, takusan!" And I indicated that it was for her that it had come *takusan* after having been *sukoshi* for so many years.

And finally I knew that strangest of Japanese phrases, *Ah, so desu-ka!* It was usually abbreviated *Ah, so!* and meant exactly what it would mean in English. It was shortened to *Soka*, *Soda*, and *Deska* and I used it for everything. Often I would hear Hana-ogi and Katsushige talking and one of them would be narrating something and the other would repeat over and over in the most mournful way, "Ah, so desu-ka! Ah, so desu-ka!" We both laughed hilariously when Joe found an American newspaper item in which a famous women journalist from New York said that even the Empress of Japan was becoming Americanized because she spoke a little English. "All the time I talked with the Empress she nodded her head and whenever she agreed with me she said clearly 'Ah, so!'"

Hana-ogi, on her part, had acquired just about as much English. Like all Japanese girls her favorite phrase was *Never happen!* She could say this with the most ravishing wit and effectively kill any high-blown idea I might be trying to make, but once when I said that some day

would see New York she said with great finality, "Never happen."

A second phrase she used a great deal was one she picked up from Katsumi and it too was common all over Japan: *I don't think so*. Hana-ogi had trouble with *th* and this phrase of classic doubt usually came out, "I don't sink so."

But if Hana-ogi had difficulty with *th*, her conflict with *l*'s and *v*'s and *f*'s was unending. She had acquired, from her Takarazuka shows, a few American phrases which she loved to use on me at unexpected moments, but they were so mangled because of the limited alphabet of sound in the Japanese tongue that I often had to think twice to detect her meaning. Once, at the end of a long night when we stayed up to clean our tiny house she caught me in her arms and cried, "Oh Rroyd, I rub you berry sweet." I was unprepared both for her emotion and her pronunciation and for one dreadful moment I almost laughed and then I looked down at her dear sweet slanted eyes and saw that they were filled with tears and we sat down on the tatami as morning broke and she told me in signs and kisses and strange half-words that she had never thought that she, Hana-ogi—dedicated to Takarazuka and knowing nothing else—would ever discover what it was to . . . She stopped and we had no words to finish the thought. Then she jumped up and cried, "I make you cawhee." And she took down the coffee pot.

It was true that not being able to talk made our physical love, there on the tatami mats, more powerful, but when that was past, when you lay there on the dark floor and heard feet along the canal path, you yearned desperately to talk of ordinary things, and once I thought of what Joe had said and I wished to God that I might be able to talk with Hana-ogi about the country club or the braces on junior's teeth or anything trivial at all—like the news that Katsumi-san was going to have a baby. I wanted to talk about that baby, what it would be like, would its eyes be Japanese, would it live well in America, but all I could do was to place my hand on Hama-ogi's

hard flat stomach and whisper, "Katsumi-san takusan-takusan." And she kept my hand there and said back, "Maybe some time Hana-ogi takusan" and we looked at each other and I think we both prayed that some day Hana-ogi would be takusan.

The matter of praying gave us some trouble, as it did Joe and Katsumi. Joe, being a good Catholic, was repelled when Katsumi established in their home a Shinto shrine complete with symbols to be prayed to. There were some heated words and the shrine came down, but I don't think Hana-ogi would have agreed to surrendering her Shinto faith, for one day I came home and found that she had erected in our home three separate shrines: Shinto, Buddhist and Catholic. I tried to explain that I wasn't any of the three, but she said she was willing to be all of them for me. I asked her why she honored both Shinto and Buddhism and she said that many Japanese were both and that some were Christians as well, and she found nothing curious in tending the three shrines faithfully and I noticed that she paid just as fair attention to my one as she did to her two.

It became so imperative that we converse with each other that we looked forward with sheer delight to the visits of Joe and Katsumi and I was glad whenever Katsumi sneaked away from Joe's surveillance and came to our house to pray to her Shinto gods for her baby to be a boy and strong. Whenever she appeared Hana-ogi and I would unleash an accumulation of questions about the most trivial things. I would say, "Tell Hana-ogi I like more salt in all my vegetables." Imagine, I had been unable to convey that simple idea accurately. And Katsumi would reply, "Hana-ogi want know, you ever eat octopus?" and I would cry, "Is that what she was trying to ask?" and I would repeat the word *octopus* and Hana-ogi would tell me what it was in Japanese and thus we would possess one more word to share.

But the hoard of meanings grew so slowly that I used to look with envy upon the G.I.'s I saw who had mastered the language. Once buying groceries I met a tough Texas

boy with his Japanese girl and they were having an argument over some apples. Finally he asked in disgust, "Hey, whatsamatta you?"

The little Japanese girl caught her breath, grew trembling mad and slapped the Texas G.I. right across the face. Then, hands on hips, she demanded, "Whatsamatta you, you whatsamatta me? I whatsamatta you first!"

The G.I. laughed and picked up a box of candy, saying with a bow, "You my gal friendo ichi ban. I presento you." The little girl put her arm in his, cocked her head on one side and asked him if he thought her pretty: "Steky-ne?" He kissed her and cried, "You're steky-goddamned-ne, baby."

I envied the couple, for they had created a language of their own and it permitted them to convey their affection accurately. Like young children who refuse to be bothered by language, they ignored both Japanese and English and inhabited a delightful world of their own.

I returned with my purchases and asked, "Hana-ogi, what *steky-ne*?" She thought for a moment then put my finger on an especially attractive design on her kimono and said, "Steky-ne." I thought she was referring to the needlework and I pointed to another part of the kimono and asked, "Steky-ne?" but she shook her head.

I was perplexed, so she thought and took my finger and outlined her wonderful oval face, leaving my hand at her chin, asking, "You think—steky-ne?" And then I realized what the word meant and I kissed her warmly and whispered, "Steky-takusan-takusan-ne."

But as the days passed and as we fell more hopelessly in love we discovered that it was impossible to exist as passionately as we insisted without better communication of ideas, so I started to learn a little Japanese and Hana-ogi—who despised Americans and what they had done to Japan—reluctantly joined an English class. She bought a little conversation book which she studied each day on the train back and forth to Takarazuka and one night she volunteered her first complete sentence in English. Screwing up her courage like a schoolgirl reciting Milton, she

swallowed, smiled at me and declaimed, "Lo, the postilion has been struck by lightning."

The shock of these words was so great that I burst into uncontrolled laughter and I saw Hana-ogi slowly freeze with hatred. I had laughed at her best intentions. I too was an American.

I rose quickly from the floor to apologize, but when she saw me move toward her she ran away. Grabbing her English book she tore it to pieces and threw them at me. Those pages which fell at her feet she trampled upon and screamed in Japanese as she did so.

Finally I caught her hands and kissed her. I held her head to mine and when she started to sob I could have torn my tongue out. This cruel inability to speak was killing us and we were becoming lost people in a void of ideas . . . We were lovers who could not love and when Hana-ogi had sought to bridge this gap—humiliating herself and surrendering her hatred of the enemy—I had laughed at her.

I realized then that words must no longer be permitted to keep us apart. I lifted Hana-ogi to the bed roll and placing her beautiful legs toward the fire, I held her head close to my heart and burst into my own words, whether she could understand them or not. That night I said, "Hana-ogi, Hana-ogi! I love you with all the heart and mind within me. I've been a barren desert . . . I've been a man flying a lost plane far in the sky and I have never before known a human being. Now I've come to an alien land among people I once hated and I've met you and taken you away from these people and brought you to a tiny house and you have made a shred of heaven here. Hana-ogi, if I've hurt you through my ignorance you ought to lash me through the streets of Osaka, for my heart is in your care and if I were to hurt you I would be destroying myself. Whether you understand or not, these words are for you." And I kissed her.

I believe she comprehended what I said, for with her face now pressed to mine she spoke softly in Japanese and I think she unburdened herself of the accumulated pas-

sions that had been tormenting her word-stricken heart. I closed my eyes and listened to the wonderful sound of her voice as she uttered the strange, angular syllables of her native language. She said one word which sounded like *hoshimashita* and I looked up and said it and she laughed and kissed my lips to keep them still while she completed her statement. She did not use one word I understood, but the meaning of her thoughts somehow seeped through and we knew that we were more deeply in love than ever before.

From that night on Hana-ogi and I talked with each other a great deal and we discovered that in love what is said is far less important to the person spoken to than the one who speaks. If I wanted to tell her that the days were growing longer and that I first noticed this during the year when I was a young boy on an Army base in Montana, I said just that, and it was marvelous for me, for then I remembered how I felt as a boy—the great cleanliness of life and the bigness—and I had a larger heart with which to love. And Hana-ogi spoke to me of her childhood and of how she dreamed of going to Tokyo and of how, when she got there, it seemed so much smaller than she had imagined. I understood only a little of what she intended, but one thing I understood with amazing clarity: when she had talked of these things for a long time she was lovelier than I had ever imagined a woman could be. In those long nights of talking, there in the bed roll on the tatami mats, I think we came closer to sharing with complete finality two human lives than will ever be possible for me again. Forbidden the use of words, we drove our hearts to understanding, and we understood.

In the morning after Hana-ogi tore up the English book I gathered the mutilated pages to burn them, but in doing so I noticed that her book had been published in 1879 by a brilliant Japanese scholar who had apparently been bowled over by English during those first wonderful days when Japan was opening her gates to Western learning. This gentleman's first sentence "for young ladies to use when starting a conversation in public" was Hana-ogi's

epic "Lo, the postillion has been struck by lightning," and although I am sure the ancient scholar never intended it so, that sentence became the gag line of an American-Japanese home. Whenever trouble appeared in any form Hana-ogi would declaim, "Lo, the postillion!"

I became intrigued by the book and smoothed out some of the other pages which yielded gems like "The port-manteau of my father is in the room of my mother." Hana-ogi asked me what this meant and I tried to explain, but the more I endeavored the sillier it all became until we were convulsed with laughter and I remember thinking, while Hana-ogi tickled me in the ribs, of the G.I. booklet on Japan which said: "The Japanese have no sense of humor."

But the phrase that quite captivated me was the very first one for use at a formal tea "where the participants are not well acquainted." The professor advised loosing this bombshell: "The camel is often called the ship of the desert." It seemed to me that this sentence was the essence of Japan: few Japanese had ever seen a camel and no one could care less what a camel was like than young ladies at tea, but the stubborn fact remained that the camel had sometimes been called the ship of the desert, so the sentence was judged to be just as good an opening salvo as any other. I tried to explain to Hana-ogi how ridiculous the whole thing was but she went to great pains to explain, with gestures, how the camel strides over the sand and seems to be a rolling ship and how the beast can go for many days without water and how there are two kinds of camels, one with one hump and the other with two. I tried to stop this flood of information, but she grabbed me by the hand and ran me down the alley to Katsumi's, where the two girls fairly exploded Japanese and Katsumi brought out her treasure chest and Hana-ogi ran through the magazines till she found one with her picture on the cover and on the inside were a half dozen pictures of her as a noble Arabian bandit in a desert extravaganza called *The Silver Sheik*. Then she commanded Katsumi to translate and Katsumi said, "But the camel really

is called *the ship of the desert*." I bit my lip and pointed to a picture of Hana-ogi in flowing robes and said, "Ichi ban, ichi ban," but Hana-ogi studied it and shook her head no. She pointed to another and said, "Very nice," ("Berry nice," she called it) and this one showed her in better profile.

FIRST OFFICER'S WIFE: "American men buying underwear for Jap girls always look so pathetic."

From time to time during this long spring of the year I used to reconsider Mike Bailey's question: Did I love Hana-ogi because I was afraid of American women? At first the question had seemed ridiculous. True, I was afraid of the incessant domination of a mother-in-law like the general's wife, but I was certainly not afraid of Eileen except when she imitated her mother, and so far as I knew I had never been afraid of American women in general. In fact, I had always liked them very much and so far as I can remember there was never a dance at the Point or at any of the Air Force bases that I didn't attend—and almost always with my own date. I decided that American women didn't scare me. But then came the problem of the weekies and I was never again so sure.

I had noticed that for some days Katsumi-san had been trying to speak with me alone and I guessed that she was hoping I might know some special way whereby she could get into the United States. Since I could give her no help I tried to avoid discussing the doleful question, but finally she caught me and asked, "Major, you my friendo ichiban?"

"Yes."

"Then maybe you buy me weekies?"

"What are weekies?"

"You go P.X. Pleeze, Ace, I not able to buy weekies."

"Why not?" I demanded. "All wives get P.X. cards."

I remember that Katsumi held back, as if not wanting to report Joe's troubles, but under my questioning she said, "Colonel Craford not give me pass. Not give any Japanese wife pass. He hate us. He hate Joe for marrying Japanese."

This made me sore, so I started out for the big avenue

It would have been simpler, I suppose, if I had cut my throat right then. Certainly the stares couldn't have been any tougher or my confusion greater. But I walked as inconspicuously as I could to the lacy counter where, as I learned by prearrangement, the clerks waited on everybody else first. So as I stood there, trying to look at some indefinite spot on the wall but always hitting brassieres or girdles, I became aware of the conversation around me. It was intended for me to hear.

The first officer's wife said, "I suppose many of our men get trapped by these girls."

The second said, "I never see them fighting very hard to stay free."

The first replied, "I can understand enlisted men and Japanese girls. Probably never knew any decent girls in America." You could tell from the emphasis that unquestionably the speaker was decent.

The second agreed, "But what is impossible to understand is how an officer can degrade his uniform."

Fortunately a clerk appeared and I said, "I'd like some weekies."

The American wives broke into laughter and the clerk said, in the sing-song professional voice used by Japanese girls, "Small, medium or large?"

I gulped and asked, "What are weekies?" This caused a real flurry of laughter in which the Japanese girl joined.

She reached under the counter and produced an open carton containing a bunch of pink nylon panties. Grabbing one she dangled it in the air and asked, "Small, medium or large?"

Now more women gathered about the counter and there was an outburst of uncontrolled hilarity. I figured that nothing else could happen so I said, "I'll take the one."

At this there was hysterical laughter and the Japanese girl popped her hand over her mouth for a moment, then showed me the band of the panty she was holding. "Major, weekies are one for every day of the week." And she showed me the embroidered word Thursday.

Frantically I indicated the entire pile and said, "I'll take them all."

But the clerk said, "These sample only. Small, medium or large?"

In despair I tried to think of how Katsumi looked. My mind was an aching blank and I pointed blindly at another Japanese clerk and said, "Her size, I guess."

Behind me one of the women whispered sweetly, "He doesn't remember how big she is!"

I looked around me at the faces of my countrywomen. They were hard and angular. They were the faces of women driven by outside forces. They looked like my successful and unhappy mother, or like powerful Mrs. Webster, or like the hurried, bereft faces you see on a city street anywhere in America at four-thirty any afternoon. They were efficient faces, faces well made up, faces showing determination, faces filled with a great unhappiness. They were the faces of women whose men had disappointed them. Possibly these harsh faces in the Osaka P.X. bore an unusual burden, for they were surrounded each day with cruel evidence that many American men preferred the softer, more human face of some Japanese girl like Katsumi Kelly.

As I paid the clerk I overheard the first officer's wife say, "All little Jap girls who live with G.I.'s are crazy for anything that will make them seem more American." The second turned to watch me go and added, "Including American men." But as I left these tough, bitter women and walked through their circle of bleak and unforgiving faces I saw near the elevator an American girl who could have been Eileen Webster. She was beautiful and fresh and perfect and I almost cried aloud with pain to think that something had happened in American life to drive men like Mike Bailey and me away from such delectable girls.

BUDDHIST MONK, 1794: "This bell we received as a gift from the girls of Yoshiwara."

Since I now knew that the secret of love is communication, I wish I could tell you exactly how Hana-ogi and I learned to talk in those exquisite days of early love, but I cannot recall how it was done. I do remember the evening when I tried to ask Hana-ogi what her name meant. I was barefooted and wearing the cheap blue-and-white kimono so common in Japan. I sat with my back against the fragile wall, my feet awkwardly out upon the tatami. I tried to convey the idea: "What does Hana-ogi mean?" but I did not succeed for the only two words she understood were *what* and her own name and she naturally suspected that I wanted to know what she wanted. So with tiny gestures and much pointing she indicated our small house of great love and said that all she wanted was to be here with me, that she wanted to hear me splashing in the tub, that she wanted to cook our meals over the glowing fire and that when she slid the paper doors shut in the evening she wanted to lock us in and the world out.

Quietly I sat against the wall and tucked my kimono tighter about me, relishing the delicate thoughts she had expressed for both of us. But then I tried again and this time she cried, "Ah, so desu-ka! The other Hana-ogi! Yes, Rroyd-san. I tell."

It is here that I wish I could explain, but I can't. Knowing almost nothing of my language this extraordinary girl nevertheless told me the following story, while I scrunched against the wall, my knees against my chin. Some of the passages she danced, some of them she pantomimed, and some she spoke in such expressive Japanese that I could fairly guess their meaning. And this is the story she told me:

Once upon a time in a small village near Tokyo there was a girl of great beauty. No one knows her name, but she was to become Hana-ogi, the most renowned prostitute in the entire history of Japan. As a child she lived with her widowed mother but it soon became apparent that her only possible future lay in the green houses of Yoshiwara, the ancient walled quarter by the marshes of Tokyo, where the unwanted young girls of farmer families were trained to become glowing and cultivated courtesans.

The old mother sold Hana-ogi when the rare child was seven, and for eight years this girl, always more beautiful, waited on the established courtesans of Ogi-ya, the green house which she would later make the most famous in all Japan. While she still wore her obi tied behind with its long ends signifying that she was virgin, the older girls taught her the skills of their trade and on her fifteenth birthday Hana-ogi discarded forever her real name, tied her obi in front, and took her first customer.

He was a young man from Odawara and he fell so desperately in love with Hana-ogi that he used to haunt the steps of Ogi-ya even when he had not the money to come inside. In perplexity he watched Hana-ogi become the most prized woman in Yoshiwara, and there were more than four thousand there at the time. She became famous for her poems, exquisite sighings of the heart and delicate memories of farm life when the early dew was on the rice fields. Priests in the temples sometimes told the worshippers of this saintly girl who took no thought of buying her own freedom from the green houses but who sent all her money home to her old mother. On holy days Hana-ogi went to a Buddhist temple that was known as the silent temple because it had no bell to record the great days and one evening Hana-ogi led a procession of thousands from the Yoshiwara bearing a bronze bell for this silent temple. It was her gift to the priests who were poorer than she.

Her fame became so great that visitors from China came to see this glory of Nihon. (My Hana-ogi rarely

called her country Japan, never Nippon.) Poets wrote famous songs about her. Men close to the Shogun came to talk with her, and above all the painters of the passing world, the wood-block artists who lived along the edge of the Yoshiwara, made many portraits of her. Today, in the museum at Kyoto, you can see maybe three dozen famous paintings of Hana-ogi. When I see them, said my Hana-ogi, I think that this immortal woman is speaking to me across the years and I take courage.

Now all the time that the great men of the Shogun's palace and the world-famous painters were with Hana-ogi, the young lover from Odawara was watching, too, and one spring as the cherry blossoms were about to bloom he abducted Hana-ogi from the green houses. Where they hid themselves, these two happy people, no one knows. Whether they had children of their love no one can say. The years passed and bad luck fell on the house of Ogi-ya. No more did the rich men and the painters come there and no more did the priests of the nearby temples receive gifts from Hana-ogi. The portraits of this unforgettable girl were sold in great quantity, for everyone wished some memento of the loveliest woman Japan had ever produced.

Then one day there was a burst of glory. (Here the real Hana-ogi, my living grace, assumed a kind of cathedral beauty as she simulated an incredible procession.) Hana-ogi had come back to the green houses. She was thirty-four years old, more beautiful than she had ever been, more stately. Young girls walked before her, bearing flowers. A minister of state walked proudly behind her. Two men held umbrellas over her head, and she was dressed in an exquisite blue kimono with rich flowing robes of purple and the geta upon her feet were eleven inches high. Within five days the greatest artists of Japan had issued magnificent pictures of her joyous return, and we can see them still, the stately processions, the rare wonderful woman coming back to her strange world.

It was the golden age! In those days there was singing and long talks and beautiful pictures and fine women and

then foresee, but they were explained to me in part by an event which occurred three nights later. Like any husband and wife we ultimately felt even our perfect home confining and we wanted to go to a movie, but this was no easy trick. Hana-ogi knew that I might be arrested if I appeared on the streets with her and I knew that she would get into serious trouble if she were seen with me, so she left our paper doors first and in five minutes I followed and we met inside the darkened theater and held hands like any beginning lovers, congratulating ourselves on having evaded the chaperones. But our luck didn't hold because this movie concerned the French Foreign Legion attacking a desert outpost and across the screen lumbered a long convoy of camels and Hana-ogi whispered, "Ships of the desert!" and I fell to laughing so hard that finally she clapped her hand over my mouth and cried, "Royd-san. Somebody see us."

She was right. People did stare and two women recognized Hana-ogi as the great star at Takarazuka, so that when the lights went up these women choked the aisle and begged an autograph and soon Hana-ogi was surrounded by young girls.

We hurried out a side door and she fled alone down back street and I ambled up the main street and when got home I found her sitting dumb on the floor, her head bowed. She told me that she had always known that some time we would be found out and that she was not frightened. She would have to leave Takarazuka but she might find a job in pictures. Or there were certain theaters in Tokyo which might offer her work. She said, "I not scared. But Takarazuka I like very very much." (She said, "I like berry berry much.")

I suggested at once that perhaps she should leave me and return to Takarazuka dormitory and endanger no longer a brilliant career but she kept staring at the floor and said quietly words which meant this: "I always planned to act till I was past forty, for I shall grow old slowly, and when my days as an actress were over I intended to take the place of Teruko-san, who was the

greatest dancer Takarazuka ever had and who now teaches us the classical steps. But when I came here, Rroyd-san, I knew the danger I ran and if tomorrow were yesterday I would come here again."

I think that's what she intended to say and I was deeply troubled by the responsibility I had undertaken and by the resolve I had made never to desert her, but when she saw my silent fears she put her soft hand upon my face and said, "This time only time I be in love. I not stop our love one day before . . ." She made a great explosion with her hands as if the world had fallen in. She embraced me and we fell back upon the bed roll and I undressed her and her slim yellow body shone in the moonlight like a strand of gold that had fallen across my pillow, and she started to whimper and said, "I not speak true. Oh, Rroyd-san, I afraid. I not want to leave Takarazuka. I not want to sit by temple—begging—old woman—teeth broken away. But if I go you now, I never find courage to come back. I never love nobody no more. Never, never. (She pronounced it, "I nebber rub nobody, nebber, nebber.") I not want to be alone. I want to sleep here, with you." Beside my head she placed her hard, tiny pillow stuffed with rice bran and we talked no more, for we were finding, as so many people must, that the ways of love are often terrifying when the day is done and one can no longer avoid studying the prospects of the future.

But next day she gave me proof of the courage she said she did not have. We were eating cold fish and rice when our doors slid back and disclosed beautiful Fumiko-san. A curious change came over Hana-ogi and it seemed that she was no longer in our little house but back on the stage at Takarazuka and I appreciated how desperately a part of her that theater was. Fumiko had come, she said, to warn us. An Osaka newspaperman had seen us at the movies and had informed the Supervisor, who had not reprimanded Hana-ogi that afternoon because he hoped she would come to her senses before he was forced to take official action. Fumiko-san implied that he had asked

her to speak with the brilliant star who had so much to lose if she persisted in her indiscretion.

Hana-ogi was deeply disturbed by this news and I became aware that these two girls had long ago formed a team of mutual protection and that they had always stood together as a team against the difficulties and defeats of their profession. Earlier Fumiko had found an American who had imperiled her career by kissing her in public and Hana-ogi had protested. Now it was Fumiko's turn to sound the warning. The two exquisite girls talked for a long time in Japanese and I judged they were assessing the various risks in the situation but Fumiko's arguments did not prevail and she left with tears in her eyes. When she had closed the doors Hana-ogi said simply, "I stay."

I discussed with her the possible results of this choice, even at times coming close to arguing on Fumiko's side, so that Hana-ogi stopped short, stood facing me, and demanded, "More better I go?" When I cried no and kissed her, she closed the discussion by saying, "I stay."

There was a firmness about her mouth when she said this and I was surprised, for I had come to look upon her as the radiant symbol of all that was best in the Japanese woman: the patient acceptor, the tender companion, the rich lover, but when Hana-ogi displayed her iron will I reflected that throughout the generations of Japanese women there had also been endlessly upon them this necessity to be firm, not to cry, not to show pain. They had to do a man's work, they had to bear cruel privations, yet they remained the most feminine women in the world. Now that I knew them, these strange Japanese women, I saw the contradiction everywhere. Katsumi was having a baby when she hadn't the slightest idea how it would be cared for or under what flag, yet it was she who bolstered up the spirits of her family. Hana-ogi had placed her career in jeopardy for a few months in a tiny house along a canal with a man who could never marry her. The young girls I saw with their American soldiers, the little women bent double carrying bricks and mortar to

the ninth story of a new building, the old women in rags who pulled plows better than horses, and the young wives with three children, one at breast, one strapped on the back, one toddling at her heels. I concluded that no man could comprehend women until he had known the women of Japan with their unbelievable combination of unremitting work, endless suffering and boundless warmth—just as I could never have known even the outlines of love had I not lived in a little house where I sometimes drew back the covers of my bed upon the floor to see there the slim golden body of the perpetual woman. I now understood why ten thousand American soldiers had braved the fury of their commanders and their country to marry such women. I understood why there were supposed to be many thousands of American-Japanese babies in the islands. I understood why perhaps a half million American men had wandered down the narrow alleys to find the little houses and the great love.

LT. COL. CALHOUN CRAFTORD: "You
goddamned nigger-lover."

On this night I could not sleep. I was agitated by Hana-ogi's problem although as events turned out, I should have been concerned about my own. I was aware that I had found that one woman whose mere presence beside me in the dark night made me both complete and courageous. Toward four in the morning I hammered my pillow in confusion and Hana-ogi awakened and felt my forehead and said, "Rroyd-san, you sick!" And she leaped up from our bed and tended me as if I were a child and I hadn't the fortitude to tell her that I was in a trembling fever because her picture of an old woman huddling beside a Buddhist temple had made me nightmarish.

She cooled my head and wrapped dry sheets about us and I went to sleep assured that somehow we would escape from the inevitable consequences of our acts. But when I woke I was shivering again, not from fever but from outrage. For Lt.Col. Calhoun Craford, a paunchy red-faced man who hated every human being in the world except certain Methodists from his corner of a hill county in Georgia, stood over our bed. His round florid face looked like a decaying pumpkin as he stared down at us.

"Well," he drawled infuriatingly. "You doin' mighty fine down there, Major." He kicked at the bed roll and Hana-ogi drew a sheet about her neck. Then Lt.Col. Craford got purple in the face and shouted, "You get to hell up here, Major Gruver. The Giniral's gonna hear about this." He muscled his way about our tiny room, knocking things over, and I leaped from bed, but before I could do anything he threw my pants in my face and grunted, "Fine spectacle you are. A giniral's son, shackin' up with a nigger."

With an almost premonitory sense I recalled Joe Kelly's

violent threat one night when he had come home beat: "Some day I'll kill that fat bastard." I felt that if Lt.Col. Craford said one more thing in that room I'd beat Kelly to the job. I think the colonel sensed this, for he looked contemptuously at Hana-ogi huddled beneath the sheet and stalked through the paper doors. They trembled as he passed.

When Lt.Col. Craford showed me in to General Webster's office in Kobe the old man minced no words. "What in hell does this mean, Lloyd!" He was much more profane than I can repeat and he had all the details. "A fine, clean, upstanding man like you! The son of a general in the United States Army. Shacking up with some cheap . . ."

I stood there and took it. He never mentioned Eileen, but it was obvious that he was bawling me out on her behalf. She had been held up to public ridicule. His wife had been made to look silly. And I had outraged the military decencies.

He shouted, "Did you sign that paper we sent you acknowledging my order about public displays of affection with indigenous personnel?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then you know what's in the order?"

"Yes, sir."

"But you defied the order?"

"No, sir."

He exploded. "What in hell do you mean, no sir?"

"I've never been guilty of public affection with a Japanese girl."

Lt.Col. Craford stepped forward and said, "One of my men saw them in the movies the other night. He followed them along the back streets. They were holding hands," he added contemptuously.

"You're a liar!" I shouted.

General Webster rapped on the desk. "You be still, Gruver. This is serious business. Now Craford, what actually happened?"

The repugnant colonel coughed, pointed at me with disgust and said, "He flagrantly broke the order. ~~General~~ Made love on the streets with a Jap girl. Set up ~~house~~ keepin' with her. We've checked her record. A ~~damn~~ whore."

"You . . ." I sprang from my position at attention and rushed at Craford. General Webster astonished me by reaching out and shoving me back.

"So you say you weren't seen with her?"

"That's what I do say, General Webster," I cried.

He became quite angry and asked in a low voice "What do you call living together? Don't you call ~~living~~ cohabitation a public display of affection?"

"No, sir," I said. "Not in terms of your order. We were never seen on the streets."

The general lost his composure and said, ~~harshly~~ "I'm going to court-martial you, young man. You've broken every law of decency. You're under house arrest. Do you stand what that means?"

"Yes, sir."

"Watch him, Craford. If he does anything ~~more~~ ~~than~~ the stockade."

"I will, sir," Craford wheezed.

"Furthermore," the general said, "I've called your father."

I gulped and he saw that that one had hurt, so I recovered by saying, "All right, sir, but I wish you hadn't."

"I wish you hadn't made an ass of yourself. Craford, take him under guard to his quarters."

Lt.Col. Craford enjoyed humiliating me, especially since I was the son of a four-star general, and he made quite a flourish of depositing me in my informal prison. He marched me into the lobby of the Marine Barracks, up the short flight of steps leading to the elevator and down the hall past all the open doors. "This is it, nigger-brother," he growled.

As soon as he was gone I called the motor ~~man~~ ~~to~~ see if I could get hold of Joe Kelly. After the first ~~call~~ ~~to~~ ~~make~~

contact and he whispered, "Can't talk, Ace, I'll be over." He arrived around noon that morning and slumped into a chair; "Jeez, Ace, the fat's in the fire."

"What happened?"

"Old Blubber-gut sent a bunch of strong-arm boys to search your house. They photographed everything. I hope you didn't have any Air Force papers you shouldn't have. Anyway, they wrecked the joint and boarded it up for good."

"What happened to Hana-ogi?"

"The neighbors say she slipped out right after you were arrested. Katsumi watched Blubber-gut's men tear up the house. Then she hurried out to Takarazuka with the news but Hana-ogi never batted an eye."

"How can people take things so calmly?" I cried.

"You learn," Joe explained. "When you're a Japanese woman or an enlisted man, you learn."

It was that evening that my real torment began, for when the performance of *Swing Butterfly* ended I looked down from my prison and saw graceful Hana-ogi, moving like a goddess down the flower walk and across the Bitchi-bashi and through the vegetable stalls and onto the path that led to the dormitory and long after she had disappeared I could see the image of that slim and graceful girl disappearing into the shadows—and I became more determined than ever that I must not lose her.

On the third evening after my house arrest began, I was sitting before the dismal meal of Marine food brought to my room by the waiter, when Mike Bailey opened my door softly, cased the joint like a detective, then motioned down the hall. In men's clothes, looking like a would-be janitor, Hana-ogi slipped in to see me. Mike made a hasty sign of benediction and tiptoed out.

I cannot describe how joyous it was to see Hana-ogi in my room. Not only had I been tortured by my longing to have her beside me in the bed roll but—as I realized now—I was even more hungry to hear her soft voice chattering of the day's events and I believe my heart actually grew bigger as she told me of the little things: "Fumiko-

san say I crazy. When Colonel Craford smash house two kimonos rost."

"What do you mean, *rost*?"

"Men take. I no find."

I became so incensed over the lost kimonos that I realized that I had reached a new meaning of the word love. I was engaged in a heavenly contest with Hana-ogi to see which of us could give most to the other and this experience of surrendering my desires to another human being was new to me and frightening in its implications. I was already thinking vaguely about the future and a perplexing problem popped out as a blunt question: "Hana-ogi, how old are you?"

She counted thirty on her fingers and I felt as if a basket of icicles had been dumped over me, for a woman of thirty and a man twenty-eight seemed abnormal. I had known several officers married to women older than they and it always turned out badly. I was suddenly glum till I remembered that a Japanese girl is considered to be one year old at birth so we figured it out that Hana-ogi was really only twenty-nine and that furthermore during eight months of each year we would be the same age. It was extraordinary how much more beautiful she seemed at twenty-nine than she had been at thirty.

Toward morning she dressed and left my room, asking "You have dinner tonight—Makino's?"

I explained what house arrest meant and said that I had pledged my honor as an officer. She said simply, "I have pledge my honor too. I have pledge the honor of my mother and the food of my two sisters." Then she kissed me and left.

So that night I put my honor way down in the bottom drawer among my socks and crept through the alleys to Makino's and as I climbed the stairs to the little room where I had first seen Hana-ogi my heart beat like the throbbing of an airplane engine and I thought, "God, that I should have become so involved," but when I got there Hana-ogi in green skirt and brown blouse was waiting for me. Old Makino made us tempura and to my surprise

found I was getting to enjoy Japanese food. We talked of many things and Hana-ogi said that soon *Swing Butterfly* (she always call it *Butterfry*) would close in Takarazuka. Maybe it would go to Tokyo. The news was terrifying and I hadn't the courage to discuss what it might mean to us but she said, "I no go Tokyo. I stay here and wait for you."

It was incredible to me that she would give up Takarazuka and I said, "Hana-ogi, you can't."

Before she could reply Makino came running in and cried, "M.P.'s!" Ashamed of myself I crowded into a cupboard and heard the heavy tread of Lt.Col. Craford's polished boots and in that moment I understood what an ugly thing fear was and why we had fought the last war against the Germans: we were fighting the tread of heavy boots. And then like the wind on a stormy day I completely changed and felt disgusted with myself, an Air Force officer breaking my word, hiding in a closet with a Japanese girl who should have hated me. It was the low spot of my life and when Lt.Col. Craford stamped down the stairs I stepped out of the closet and said, "Hana-ogi, I've got to go back."

She looked at me closely and asked, "When M.P. come . . ." She pointed at the closet and asked, "You sorry?" She could not find the right word for *ashamed* but she did bring a blush to her cheeks and she did act out my shame.

"Yes," I said. "I gave my word." But as I turned to go a flood of terrible longing overtook me and I grasped her face in my hands and cried, "Don't go to Tokyo, Hana-ogi. Wait here. I cannot let you go."

Her slim, straight body grew limp and she whispered to me in Japanese, something which meant, "Not Takarazuka or my mother could take me away."

I kissed her hands as I had done that first night. There were a hundred things I wanted to say, but I was choked with confusion. I walked boldly down the stairs, marched openly along the street to the Marine Barracks. Hana-ogi, aware of the deep shame I had felt in the closet and

sharing it with me, marched just as brazenly beside me in her distinctive Takarazuka costume and kissed me good-bye at the barracks. "Rroyd-san," she said softly, "I love you takusan much."

can officers might love those alien names and the curious creatures to whom they belonged. He shouted, "Run yourself over some common whore!"

I had taken a lot these last few days and I'd had enough. I hauled back my right fist and let my father have one below the left ear. He staggered back, got his footing and came at me, but General Webster separated us. We were all trembling and furious but Webster spoke first: "By God, you've struck a . . ."

"Get out of here, Webster," my father snapped. "I'll handle this."

Frightened and dismayed, General Webster retreated and while we watched him go, I had a moment to steel myself for the brawl I knew must follow. Four times in my father's career he had dragged colleagues into a boxing ring where in the anonymity of shorts he had massacred them. Before our fight began I thought in a flash of how strange it was that I had belted my father for saying far less than what Lt.Col. Craford had said and I experienced a dizzy sensation that when he turned back to face me I would see my enemy and my friend.

I shook the dizziness away and cocked my fists, but when he turned he was grinning and chomping his gum. "I take it she's not a prostitute," he laughed.

I started to say, "Sir, this girl . . ." but he interrupted me and pulled me into a chair beside him and asked, "Son, what's this all about?"

Again I started to explain but he said, "I flew out here from the Presidio to knock some sense into you. But you're not in the market for sense, are you?"

I said, "I don't want any lectures."

He laughed and chewed his gum and said, "Son, I wouldn't respect you if you hadn't swung on me. She seemed right pretty and you say she isn't a tramp?"

I told him who she was and he said, "By heavens, Mark Webster must have dropped his drawers when he heard about you having a home. He drove me in to see it. Say, they don't build very big houses in Japan, do they? Say, tell me how you promoted a house?"

I started to tell him about Katsumi and Joe but he said, "Lord knows, son, I hoped you would marry Eileen Webster. Good family, staunch military background. Mother's a bit of a bore but in service you can always get away from her. Say, have you heard the news that really galls Webster? His daughter's serious about a real-estate salesman from Seattle. Major, I think. Webster's furious and is rotating the fellow back to the States."

He sized me up carefully, chewing his gum, and said, "Y'know, son, if you still wanted Eileen you could have her. Wait a minute! Don't underestimate that kind of marriage. Right now you're all boiled up about sex, but a man lives a long life after that fire goes down. Then you appreciate having a woman you can talk to, some one who knows military life. What do you and Madame Butterfly talk about?"

He waited for me to speak but as soon as I started he said, "Let's get back to Eileen. You ever know any officers married to women who disliked the military? Sad lot. Sad business. Your mother and I haven't been what you might call romantic lovers . . ." He slapped his leg and burst into real laughter. "Could you imagine your mother in a shack along a canal! But anyway we've always been able to talk. We want the same things. We want the same things for you, Lloyd."

He paused and I thought I was back in St. Leonard's on another occasion like this. My father was saying, "Your mother and I want the same things for you, Lloyd," but even then I knew for a certainty that Mother had never wanted those things for me and I had the strange feeling that if she were in Japan right now—if she knew the whole story—she would be on my side and not Father's.

He said, "I suppose you've figured what your present course would mean to things like life plans."

"What do you mean, present course?"

"Well, getting married to a Japanese girl."

"Married!"

"Sure, married." He chewed his gum real fast and then

said, "You mean you haven't thought about marriage? You mean you think you're the smartest guy on earth. Can shack up with a girl, have children even, and never think of marriage."

"I wasn't thinking of marriage," I said weakly.

"I know you weren't," he roared. From the other room General Webster stuck his head through the door and asked nervously, "Everything all right?"

"Get out of here," my father commanded, and I thought how rarely men like him could respect men like Webster or men like the one I seemed on the verge of becoming. "Squaw man," the Army would have called me in the old days. He walked up and down the room flexing his head muscles and then turned sharply, speaking in machine-gunlike tones.

"Don't you see what's gonna happen, son? You're gonna work yourself into a box. You'll be unable to find a solution. So suddenly you hit on marriage! You'll marry the girl and that'll make everything just dandy. Good God, son! You're twenty-eight years old. Why didn't you marry Eileen that summer in San Antonio?"

Softly, with the mention of Eileen's name, that dreamy summer flooded back to me here in Korea and I said, "I never really understood, Father. I guess I must have been that bachelor party."

"What party?" he asked suspiciously. "What?"

"Not what you mean. Remember when General Howard's son was marrying Della Crazer?"

"You mean Harry Crane's girl?"

"Yes. Her father had been killed at the Battle of Iwo Jima."

"Damned brave man. We could use a few more like Harry Crane in Korea."

"So Mark Webster's wife was married to Harry Crane?"

"The wedding. Very formal. Eileen was the bride. One of us younger officers took Charlie Howard to the wedding. He was so drunk he was fifteen minutes late. Everybody thought it was a joke. Mark Webster. After the wedding she got a letter from Harry Crane."

lashing. It wasn't that we'd spoiled Della and Charley's wedding. It was that we'd spoiled her plans. I've always been afraid of Eileen since then."

"Afraid?"

"Well, sort of. After the ceremony the four of us who had gotten Harry drunk drove out to Randolph Field. Nobody said anything and we drove very fast and once when a Ford truck almost socked us one of the men said, 'That would be the second truck that mowed us down today,' and we all laughed and got drunk again and for the rest of that summer I never really seriously thought about marrying Eileen. Then Korea came along."

"But you have thought about marrying Madame Butterfly?"

"No," I said.

"A son doesn't bust his father, Lloyd, unless he's thinking pretty deeply about something. Look, son. Suppose you do marry this yellow girl. I'm on the selection board and your name comes up. I'd pass you by and if I wasn't on the board I'd advise the others to pass you by. We don't want officers with yellow wives. And where would you live in America? None of our friends will want you hanging around with a yellow wife. What about your children? Y'can't send half-Jap boys to the Point."

I thought it was very like my father to assume that all his grandchildren would be boys who would naturally attend the Point. I was going to say something about this, but he kept talking.

"Son, Mark Webster was blustering. I've talked him into forgetting your court-martial. When I was sore I asked him to cut orders sending you back to Korea. Even yet it's a great temptation for me to approve those orders and tell you to get back there and fight this thing out. But you've had Korea. Say, how are those Russian jets?"

I said they were good and he asked, "Y'think that Russian pilots man those planes?"

I said I thought so but we hadn't captured any.

"Those Russian are bastards," he said. "Real bastards."

I said, "We've been able to handle them so far."

He banged the chair and said, "Son, don't take sex too seriously."

I said, "What should you take seriously?"

He said, "A whole life." He chewed his gum furiously and said, "A whole, well-rounded life."

I said, "Promotions and place in society and things like that?"

He looked at me quizzically and said, "You pulling my leg, son?"

I said, "Like the way you married a general's daughter?"

He said very calmly, "I ought to clout you. I just don't understand you sometimes. In ten years you'll be fighting the Japs again."

"Maybe. But I won't be fighting Hana-ogi."

"How can an officer get mixed up with a Japanese girl and take it seriously?"

I said, "Look, Pop. This gag worked once. This man-to-man . . ."

He looked half amused and asked, "What do you mean?"

I said, "Remember St. Leonard's when I thought I wanted to skip the Point and study English or something like that?"

"Long time ago, I'd forgotten."

"No you didn't, Pop. All the way out here from the Presidio you tried to remember what trick it was that convinced me then to do what you wanted me to do."

He blustered a moment and said, "Son, let's not obscure the facts. I'm here because you're my son and I'm very proud of you. Believe it or not I'm even proud that you had the guts to ignore Mark Webster's stupid order and find yourself a house in Osaka. But I don't want to see a decent American kid like you waste his life. Son, I've watched our men marry German girls and French girls and even Russian girls. Invariably, if you know the man, it's a sign of weakness. They're all panty-waists. Strong men have the guts to marry the girls who grew up next door. Such marriages fit into the community. They make

the nation strong. In your case and mine such marriages fit into military service. Leave it to the poets and painters and people who turn their back on America because they're afraid of it to go chasing after foreign girls."

He chomped his gum and said, much more slowly, "I ever tell you about Charley Scales? Resigned his commission and joined General Motors. Said he'd make a lot of money and he did. Some years later he came to proposition me about joining him. Lloyd, that was in 1933 when the Army was the garbage can of democracy but I didn't even think twice. I've been tempted in my life but never by Charley Scales. Right now!" He snapped his fingers and said, "Who'd you rather be, Charley Scales or me?"

It was a childish trick but it had a great effect on me. In my mind's eye I could see Charley Scales, a big, happy man of some distinction in Detroit and the world. But to compare him with my father was ridiculous.

Father said, "You talk this over with your Madame Butterfly. You'll find she agrees with me."

I said, "I will."

He said, "By the way, where'd she learn English?"

I said she didn't speak English and he cried, "You mean you've learned Japanese?"

I said, "No."

He stopped chewing his gum and looked at me. "You mean—you have no common language? French, maybe?"

I said, "Well, you see . . ."

"You mean you can't talk together?"

"Well, on a really intricate problem she . . ." I was going to explain that she danced the words for me, but I felt that Father wouldn't understand. But he surprised me.

When he realized that we shared no language he became unusually gentle. I cannot recall his ever having been quite as he was at that moment. He put his arm about my shoulder and said reassuringly, "Son, you'll work this thing out."

He called for General Webster and said gruffly, "Mark,

I was wrong. I'm tearing up these orders for Korea. The kid doesn't need Korea. His problem is right here."

General Webster said, "That's what I told him and look how . . ."

"Mark, don't blow your top at this kid."

"Why not? Disobeying an order, breaking his word, striking a superior . . ."

Father laughed and said, "Now you and I know, Mark, that it was completely silly to issue such an order to a bunch of healthy young men surrounded by pretty girls. But that's beside the point. Don't get sore at Lloyd."

"Why not?"

"Because he's going to be your son-in-law."

"He's what?"

"He doesn't know it yet, and Eileen doesn't know it yet but if you want to do something constructive, keep the real-estate salesmen away from your daughter. Because sooner or later she's going to be my daughter, too."

The two generals stamped out of the barracks and three hours my father was on his way back to the Presidio.

WATANABE-SAN: "You pull this lever and the steel ball shoots up there and falls back down."

If Father thought that the tricks which had defeated me in prep school would still work he was misled, for now I knew my mind. I had met a delectable woman, one whom *I could love forever, and I simply wasn't worried* about fathers and generals and Air Force rules. Here on this earth I had found Hana-ogi and by the time my father arrived back in California she and I had things worked out. We made a deal with Joe and Katsumi whereby we took one corner of their house and here we established a life as warm and loving as two human beings have ever known.

I would come home from the airfield to find Joe and Katsumi preparing the evening meal. They would tell me what had happened that day and I would exchange military gossip with Joe, but it would be a nervous time, for I would be watching the door and finally we would hear Hana-ogi's soft steps coming up the alley and Katsumi and Joe would slip away for a moment to gather wood or buy things at the store. The door would open and there would be Hana-ogi, a glimmer of perspiration on her soft golden cheeks. Like all Japanese she carried her books and bundles wrapped in a bright silk shawl tied cross cornered, and when I think of her at the sliding door of that little house I see her kick off her saddle shoes, drop the silken bundle, run her hand through her hair and hurry across the tatami to kiss me. At such times I would catch her in my arms, swing her into the air and drop her behind the screen that cut off our portion of the room. There she would swiftly slip off her Western clothes and slowly fold herself into a brocaded kimono. She was lovely; beyond words she was lovely.

But I must not imply that the warmth and wonder of that house came solely from Hana-ogi, beautiful and complete as she was, for I think that I have never seen a more satisfactory wife than Katsumi Kelly. She organized her house to perfection and kept it immaculate, even though Hana-ogi and I were apt to be careless. She could cook, she could sew, she could talk on many subjects and as her pregnancy advanced she gave promise of being an even finer mother than she was a wife.

Sometimes I used to watch her and I recalled with embarrassment that once in the consul's office I had almost refused to kiss her because she seemed so clodden and repugnant with her giggling and her big gold tooth. Now she seemed to me one of the most perfect women I had ever known, for she had obviously studied her man and had worked out every item of the day's work so that the end result would be a happy husband and a peaceful home. I asked Joe about this once and he said, "Ten years from now in America there'll be a club. Us fellows who married Japanese girls. Our password will be a suppressed giggle. Because we won't want them other lugs down the street to discover what gold mines we got."

I asked, "Are all Japanese wives as good as Katsumi?"

He said, "I admit I got somethin' special. But you don't hear the other boys kickin'." We wrapped our kimonos around our legs and sat back to enjoy one of the sweetest moments of the day. The girls were preparing supper and we listened to them talking Japanese. Katsumi spoke rapidly—the day's gossip, no doubt—and Hana-ogi, washing our rice, said over and over at least two dozen times, "Hail Hail!" The phrase shot out of her mouth with such force it seemed to have come from the very bottom of her stomach, a cry of primeval terror. Actually it was merely the Japanese way of saying *yes*. But in addition to this machine-gun *hai* she kept nodding her head and chanting mournfully, "Ah, so desu-ka! Ah, so desu-ka!" To hear the girls in any trivial conversation would convince you that some sublime tragedy had overtaken us all.

Joe finally asked, "What are you sayin'?"

Katsumi looked up startled and explained, "I speak Hanako-san about a fish my father catch one day."

I started to laugh but Joe asked quietly, "Was it a big fish?"

"More big than this one," Katsumi said proudly. "Hanako-san say she never see such a fish." I liked Katsumi's name for Hana-ogi. Japanese girls often take their names from feminine or poetic words to which they generally add -ko or -yo. Thus at Takarazuka most girls had names like "Misty Snow" or "Spring Blossom" or "Starry Night." And their names usually ended in -ko. For myself, I preferred the other form, Hanayo, and once Hana-ogi told me, "Hanako more Japanese but Hanayo more sweet."

The longer I lived with Joe Kelly, reared in an orphanage and rejected by his foster parents, the more astonished I was that he could adjust so perfectly to married life. He was a considerate husband, a happy clown around the house and the kind of relaxed and happy family man you see in the advertisements of the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Speaking of the *Post*, it helped me understand a little better what married life is. On May 30th the girls were all whispers and at dinner they sprang the big surprise! It was an American holiday, so they had pumpkin pie. Where they had finagled the pumpkin we never knew, but the pie was something out of this world, for they had used the pumpkin as you would apples or cherries and had baked it just as it came out of the can and it was really dreadful. I took one look at it and started to say, "What . . ." but Joe cut me short and tasted his piece.

"It's good," he said laconically.

The girls bit into their pieces and you could see them sort of look at each other as if to say, "Americans must be crazy. To eat something like this on holidays." We finished the disgusting dessert in silence and four days later Katsumi, leafing through an old copy of the *Post* saw a picture of real pumpkin pie. She waited till I got home and surreptitiously asked me if that was pumpkin

pie. I said yes and she asked me how it stayed so thick and so soft and I told her how you made pumpkin custard and she started to cry and when Joe came home she hugged him and kissed him and told him how ashamed she was and since Hana-ogi wasn't home yet I sat glumly in my corner and thought about the time I had laughed at Hana-ogi for her sentence, "Lo, the postillion has been struck by lightning," and I concluded that Joe's way was better and I wondered how a kid from an orphanage could understand a problem like that while I hadn't had the slightest glimmer.

However, I must not imply that all Japanese women are perfect wives. A trip along our alley would convince anyone that Japanese homes contained every problem to be found in American homes; plus some very special ones. In the narrow house next us lived the Shibatas. He was a minor business official who received practically no pay but had an enviable expense account from which he drew on most nights of the week for expensive geisha parties. He siphoned off part of the expense account to support one of the pretty young geishas on the side. It was rumored that he kept her in a second home near the center of Osaka and traditionally his wife should have accepted such an arrangement with philosophical indifference, but Mrs. Shibata was not traditional. She was modern and tried to stab her husband with a knife. At three in the morning when black-coated little Shibata-san came creeping home we could catch a moment of silence as the door to his house opened, followed by an explosion from his wife who used to chase him with a club. She was notoriously shrewish, and Katsumi and Hana-ogi apologized for her. "Japanese wife expected to understand men like geisha," they said.

Nor were most Japanese wives the patient silent creatures I had been told. When Sato-san, a railroad employee, took his wife shopping she trailed a respectful three feet behind him and never spoke a word unless spoken to by her immediate friends. But at home she was a tyrant and rebuked Sato-san contemptuously for

not earning more money. As I came to know the wives of Japan I had to conclude that they were exactly like the wives of America: some were gentle mothers, some were curtain dictators and some few were lucky charms who brought their men one good thing after another. I decided that which kind a man found for himself was pretty much a matter of chance, but whenever I looked at Hana-ogi I had an increasingly sure feeling that I had stumbled upon one of the real lucky charms.

Across the alley lived the widow Fukada and her twenty-year-old daughter Masako, who had had a G.I. baby without being married. Sometimes at night we could hear the grandmother screaming at Masako that she was a slut, and other women in the alley agreed. The American baby was not wanted and was not allowed to play with pure Japanese babies, and although everyone in the alley loved Joe Kelly and Katsumi and although they were proud to have a great Takarazuka actress living among them with her American flier, there was deep resentment against Masako Fukada, who had disgraced the blood of Japan.

Down the alley were the hilarious Watanabes. His wife was almost as broad as he was tall. They got along together fine except that Watanabe-san had a mistress even more compelling than a geisha: he was mad-crazy to play pachinko. He spent all his money at pachinko and all his spare hours at the pachinko parlor. When the police closed the parlor each night at eleven he would reluctantly come home and we would hear fat Mrs. Watanabe shouting derisively, "Here comes Pachinko-san! Dead broke!"

The pachinko parlor stood on the corner nearest the canal, an amazing single room lined with upright pinball games. For a few yen Watanabe-san would be handed seven steel balls, which he would shoot up to the top of the pinball machine and watch agonizingly as they fell down to the bottom, almost always missing the holes which paid the big prizes. The pachinko parlor on our alley was filled from morning till night and everyone was

bitten by the pachinko bug, including Hana-ogi and me, and it was a curious fact that my friendship with the pachinko players in that crowded parlor would later save my life.

Across the alley from the pachinko room was the flower shop. You would have thought there could not be in that entire alley one rusty yen for flowers, but almost everyone who lived along our narrow gutters stopped into the flower shop for some solitary spray of blooms which was carried reverently home for the alcove where the gods lived. I cannot recall a moment when there were not flowers in our alcove and I—who had never known a violet from a daisy—came to love them.

The next shop is difficult to describe. In fact, it is impossible because in all the rest of the world there are no shops quite like these in Japan. It was a sex shop where husbands and wives could purchase tricky devices with which to overcome nature's mistakes and short changings. To satisfy our curiosity Katsumi-san took Joe and me there one day. The shy owner listened as we laughed at his amazing collection of sex machines. Then he said in Japanese, "Go ahead, laugh. Young Japanese men laugh, too. But when they're married and reach forty they come to me for help." Katsumi translated and then broke into an uncontrolled giggle. I asked her what she had said and she explained, "I tell him Joe no need help." The shy owner smiled nervously and replied, "At twenty nobody needs help."

But the true wonders of our alley were the children. I could neither count them nor forget them. They had round faces, very red cheeks, straight black bangs, fat little legs and boundless joy. I don't think I ever heard a Japanese child cry. Certainly I never saw one struck and I came to believe that the most delectable children I had ever seen were these noisy, hilarious children. Whenever they crowded around me as I came up the alley I loved Hana-ogi more.

Each house in our alley was desperately packed, so that one tiny room often became the equivalent of a full-

sized American home and these teeming masses of people lived and worked and had babies and argued politics just like all people across the world. But there was this difference. Not a shred of anything was wasted, not even the human manure which was so patiently gathered each morning and from which sprang the flowers and the food. I recall certain evenings that spring when I entered this narrow alley at close of day and the front of every house would be open and dozens of children would run, black-bobbed, to greet me and from every open room facing the alley and the people of Japan would speak with me and I shared a warmth and goodness that I had never known in Lancaster or the camps where I grew up. I was one of the people—one of the millions of people who cling to whatever shred of hope and property they can grab hold of, and from this alley with the myriad children and the brawling and the flowers and the unwanted American-Japanese baby and the pachinko games and the sake drinking I borrowed a strength I had never had before.

CONSULAR REPORT: "Eskivan, Peter. Mother says, 'No damned good.' "

It expressed itself in an unforeseen way. I was in my office at Itami Air Base when a sergeant appeared to tell me that Lt.Col. Calhoun Craford was outside. The florid colonel stepped in and got right down to business. "You think you're smart" (he said it: *Yawll thank yore smaht*) "gettin' a four-star giniral to come out and save your neck. You accustomed to hidin' behind your pappy's back?" Then he let me have it. "My men been trailin' you, Gruver. We know you and that tramp are holed up in enlisted man's quarters. But we can't touch you because of your pappy. So we're doin' something better. We're sendin' Joe Kelly back to the States."

"But what'll happen to Katsumi?"

The fat colonel looked at me with disgust. "Who's Kats-what's-his-name?"

"Kelly's wife."

"The Jap girl. Not up to us to worry what happens to her."

"You're not breaking up this family?"

"Don't call it a family. The girl's a cheap Jap tramp."

I said that Katsumi was a decent girl, that she was studying to become a Catholic, like her husband, but apparently Lt.Col. Craford hated Catholics worse than he hated colored people, for he said, "And when we finish with Kelly we'll figure out some way to handle you. Father or no father."

He left me and I sat for a long time staring at my desk, contemplating the mess I had made of things. I had proved myself a shoddy officer. I had loused up the life of an enlisted man. I had made Eileen look ridiculous and I hadn't done much better with Hana-ogi. Then I began to weigh what I had accomplished in Japan and

things looked brighter. I had come to know what a home meant, an unpretentious home where love was. I had found a beautiful girl filled with tenderness and grace and wit. I had learned at last to share my heart with another human being. And most of all I had discovered the tremendous passion of turning down the bed roll at night and seeing the slim, perfect body of Hana-ogi. I jumped up and cried, "Gruver-san, if you lose that girl you're nuts. Marry her, stupid. Marry her."

But as soon as I had said the words I began to sweat and I remembered all the predictions my father had made that night in the Marine Barracks. My career gone, my wings and their promise lost, my place in my American world vanished and I with an Asiatic wife. It was then that my new-found courage asserted itself.

I recognized the trick my father had played on me. He had planted those poisonous seeds so that they could flourish at just such a moment, and I decided that it was against such tricks that I was revolting. I did not want to become a general like my father, with his cold cut-offness from the world. I didn't want to be a second General Webster, ruled by Eileen. And I certainly didn't ever want to become a Lt.Col. Craford. I wanted to be one man, standing by myself, sharing whatever world I could make with the woman who had helped me to discover that world. In my moment of resolution and light I knew that I would never waver from my purpose. I was going to marry Hana-ogi.

I called Joe Kelly and asked him to meet me at a tiny bar we knew in Osaka where M.P.'s never came. It's impossible to describe such Japanese bars to Americans. How can you explain a bar so small that it has space for only four customers and two hostesses?

"Joe," I said in greeting, "can you keep a secret?"

"Sure, Ace."

"I mean two secrets. Big ones?"

"Hanako havin' a baby?"

"Joe, Blubber-gut is laying for you. He's going to ship you home first chance he gets."

"That's no secret. He threatened me openly two days ago. I didn't tell anybody. Didn't want to worry you. But he shouted, 'All you nigger-lovers are goin' home soon.'"

"Joe, I want you to promise me you won't do anything stupid."

"Me? I should be stupid like him?"

"Look. One night I heard you tell Katsumi you were going to shoot Blubber-gut."

"Me? I'm no rod man. What's your other secret?"

I ordered another beer and took a big gulp. "Exactly what papers do you have to sign to marry a Japanese girl?"

Joe whistled and said, "Look, Ace. This ain't for you. I suppose Hanako is beggin' you to marry her! It ain't for you."

"Joe, don't jump to conclusions. I haven't told her yet but so help me God, I'm going to marry that girl. What are the steps?" He repeated his earlier warning and asked, "You mean you're sorry you married Katsumi?"

A big grin broke on Joe's face and he said, "One night I told you that bein' married to that Buddha-head was livin'. It ain't. It's somethin' much finer than livin'. It's like you was dead and all the stress and strain was over and all that was left was the very best—and it's the best because it's all wrapped up in her. It ain't livin', Ace. I used to live in Chicago. This is way beyond that."

I sat with my hands over my face and didn't look up for a moment. Then I said, "I feel exactly that way about Hanayo."

Joe ignored this and said, "Ace, I don't believe you could take the bad time they give you."

"What do you mean?"

"They wear you down. Enlisted men get used to being worn down but you ain't had the experience of diggin' your heels in real stubborn and resistin'."

"How do you mean?"

"They give you so many papers. The chaplain prays over you. And everything they do they do with crazy

smiles, like you was off your rocker and only they could save you. And what's worse, they ask the girl so many heart-burnin' questions. Hana-ogi won't tell you but some night when you kiss her she'll break down and cry for an hour. I don't think you could take it."

I said, "Tomorrow morning I'm starting the paper work."

He said, "Ace, you're a big man. It would make them look silly to lose you to a Japanese girl. So they'll hit you with big stuff."

"I'm ready."

"Ace, they'll hit you with generals and admirals and men who knew your father. The only way you can swing it is to get the help of your Congressman. Who is he?"

"I don't know."

"Where do you live?"

"I don't have . . ."

"Well, where do you vote?"

"I've never voted." For the first time I realized that I was completely a military man. The Air Force was my home. I cast my vote with the talking end of an F-86.

Joe studied this and said, "Don't worry. Practically any Congressman would love to fight your battle. You want me to take it up with Shimmack? He loves to get his name in the paper."

I thanked Joe and said I'd work it out somehow, but that very night they started to throw the big reasons at me, even before I had told Hana-ogi that I was going to give up the Air Force and marry her. It happened a long way off, in Texas, for that night I heard a radio program explaining why the Democrats of Texas were going to support Dwight Eisenhower for President. I had known the general at several different bases and had played with his son. Suddenly, there in the dark streets of Osaka, Eisenhower became the symbol of what a major in the Air Force might become: a man ready for many different kinds of action if his country needed him. For one hellish hour I walked the streets weighing what I was doing and then I found myself at the entrance to my

alley, and skinny Watanabe-san had struck it rich pachinko and ran out in the street to offer me a bet and I got a rosy glow on, and about eleven Hana-o came down to take me home, but I did not tell her the of the great decision I had made.

In the morning I sneaked into Kobe, for I did not want either General Webster or Lt.Col. Craford to see me and I went to the American consulate. Luck was with me, for Mr. Carstairs, the fuddy consul, was not yet in and I could talk privately with his secretary, the horsed faced girl who had married a G.I.

She recognized me at once and said, "You made my kid brother the hero of his whole block."

"How do you mean?"

"Your autograph. The kids take Korea seriously, even if grownups don't."

Although she said this with a smile I noticed that she was eyeing me suspiciously and after I had made a few awkward starts at conversation she put her two hands firmly on her desk and said, "Major Gruver, did you come here to find out about marrying a Japanese girl?"

I gulped and must have blushed, for she added immediately, "I can spot you guys a mile off. What are you ashamed of?"

I asked her what she meant by that and she laughed. "You all think there's some tricky way to get around the red tape. And you're all ashamed to speak to your superior officers." She looked up at me with such infectious amusement that I had to laugh, whereupon she said, "But you're Ace Gruver. I never thought you'd tumble for a Buddha head."

I fumbled a bit and asked, "Just what are the paper requirements?"

"I can't tell you a thing, Major."

"You work here."

"Forbidden. You military heroes have to clear everything through your chain of command."

"You mean it's as tough as that?"

"It's tougher, Major. We don't want men like you

marrying Japanese girls. We make it extra tough for men like you."

"I was only asking," I said.

"Sure! There hasn't ever been a soldier in here who really intended to get married. They were all only asking!"

"Then you won't help?"

The big girl looked out the door to see if Mr. Carstairs had arrived yet. Satisfying herself on that point she said, "Old Droopy Drawers lives by the book. He'd fire me if he saw me talking with you about legal matters. But I figure if a man can shoot down seven MIG's he's entitled to some help."

She showed me a completed file on a sailor who had married a Japanese girl. I had heard of the paper work. I had even seen some of it during Joe Kelly's marriage. But I had not comprehended how repetitious and degrading it was. I began to understand what Joe meant when he said that only an enlisted man, conditioned to standing in line and taking guff, could see a Japanese wedding through.

I said, "Isn't this a pretty tough obstacle course?"

The girl laughed and said, "If I had my way, we'd make it tougher. Men like you oughtn't to grab Jap girls just because they're available."

"I don't want a lecture," I protested.

"Look, Major. I'm your big sister. Remember? We just made a study of which Americans were marrying Japanese girls. The findings aren't pleasant." She riffled some papers and read off the dismal case histories: "Wyskanski, Noel. Orphaned. No education. Had a fist fight with the Catholic priest. Reform school." "Merchant, Nicholas. Ran away from home. Been in guard house regularly since being drafted. Two court-martials. Threatened the Japanese social worker who proved that the first girl he wanted to marry was a notorious prostitute." "Kelly, Joe. Your friend. Worst record in the Air Force in Korea. Constant discipline problem. Accused of murdering a drunk in Chicago but case thrown out of court on technicality.

Always on the verge of criminal prosecution. Recommended twice for dismissal from the Air Force." I tossed Kelly's paper aside and asked bluntly, "How'd you get mixed up with a dead-end mutt like him?"

"He was in my unit."

"Did you meet your Japanese girl through Kelly?" I hesitated a moment trying to frame an answer but the smart girl understood. She put aside the file and said patiently, "Major Gruver, you're simply not the type to marry these men—these perpetual failures . . ." She hammered the file and turned away to blow her nose. At that moment the front door opened and in came prim Mr. Carstairs. In one instantaneous glance he saw me and the marriagee and his secretary wiping her eyes. He stepped quickly into the middle of the doorway and said, "My goodness, Major Gruver isn't thinking of getting married to a Japanese girl, is he?"

The secretary looked up and sniffed. "Yes, damn it, he is. And I've been telling him he's a complete fool."

"You are," Mr. Carstairs said. He passed through the room and said sharply as he left, "But there's nothing to worry about. The Air Force wouldn't let such a thing happen."

When he was gone the secretary asked, "Has your girl started her part of the paper work?"

I said, "Well . . . I haven't . . ."

With great relief the big girl started to laugh. "I understand! You haven't asked her, have you? Thank God!"

I blushed and said, "Look, we're getting married."

She ignored this and said, "I feel so much better. Dozens of you men come in here to ask about getting married. But most of you haven't proposed yet. They breathe easy because everything is all right."

"You have some special way of stopping it?"

"No," she said surprised. "It's just that first-class Japanese girls won't marry American men. They prefer Japanese. Act, believe me, it's ten-to-one that the girl you desire won't marry you, and the kind you can get, you won't want."

I looked at the shabby office and at the pile of marriage reports. Grimly I said, "You can start a new file. 'Gruver, Lloyd. Well educated. Never in trouble. Best man the Air Force had in Korea. Clean-cut American type. Married a Japanese girl because he loved her.' Show it to your Mr. Carstairs every day."

In real anger I went over to the village of Takarazuka, where I waited in a vegetable stall near the Bitchi-bashi and toward noon I saw the first Takarazuka girls go by in their swaying green skirts. Then Fumiko-san passed me and I hid in the back of the store until she had disappeared. Finally I saw Hana-ogi approaching and I had that rare experience that a man sometimes knows when he sees the girl he loves picking her way along a crowded lane unaware that he is watching, and at such times—when the girls are not on their good behavior, you might say—they are extraordinarily lovely and ratify doubly all thoughts and decisions of preceding days. Hana-ogi was like that. She wore a gray kimono flecked with silver and gold, and it encased her lovingly, and her feet in light gray zori threaded an intricate pattern through the crowds of noonday shoppers, and as she drew near my vegetable stall I was fluttering like a broken propeller but at last I knew what I wanted. I reached out, grabbed her arm, and drew her in beside me. The man who ran the stall smiled and moved out onto the pavement accustomed to having his shop invaded in that manner.

short hair grew down in sideburns. She looked at me for a moment and tears came into her dark eyes.

"We no speak of marriage, Rroyd-san. No. No."

"I know it's a surprise," I said. "But I've thought it out and I'm willing to give up the Air Force and find some other job."

"But Rroyd, I no go America."

"We'll work that out, too," I said. "Some time they will change this crazy law so a man can take his wife home."

"You no understand, Rroyd-san. I no want to go."

I stepped away from the giant radishes and stared at Hana-ogi. It was incomprehensible to me that any Japanese girl, living in that cramped little land with no conveniences and no future, would refuse America. What was it the officer's wife in the Osaka P.X. had said: "Those damned little Jap girls lay in wait at street corners with lassos and rope the American soldiers in." I said, "I'll explain it all to you tonight."

But she replied most strangely, "Some day you leave Japan, Rroyd-san. Before you go I like you see pictures of real Hana-ogi. In Kyoto."

"I don't want to see any pictures!" I cried. "Damn it, I came here to tell you we're getting married."

"You get auto tomorrow morning—early." She moved quickly toward the door of the shop, then turned to kiss me passionately on the lips. "When you go back America," she said, "I want you remember great beauty of Hana-ogi."

THE CURATOR: "It is unlikely that even one foreigner in all our history has truly understood Japan."

Early next morning we left Osaka in Lt. Bailey's Chevy and drove along the side of a river which for untold centuries had carried water to the rice fields of this region. It lay far below the level of the road, hemmed in by strong dikes built many generations ago and upon all the land there was the mark of much toil and the footprints of many people. Wherever we looked women were at work hauling and lifting.

Our entrance to Kyoto was memorable, for we saw in the distance the soaring towers of great Buddhist temples, their tiers built with corners upswept in the Chinese style. And along one street we caught a glimpse of the famed Heian Shinto shrine, a glorious vermilion thing with enormous blood-red torii guarding it.

But today we were not interested in shrines or temples. We went along a side street burdened with age-old pines, where underneath a canopy of evergreen we stopped to enter a museum. It was built like a temple, with nearly a hundred statues of stone and wood, as if the old heroes of Japan had gathered to greet us, frozen forever in their stiff ceremonial attitudes. The curator hurried up to us and when he learned that I could speak no Japanese he summoned a striking young man. He was in his thirties, I judged, and wore heavy glasses. He had excellent teeth, a frank smile and a rare command of English.

"I studied at Oxford," he explained, "and served for some years in our store on Fifth Avenue and for two years in our store in Boston. What did you wish to see?" It was clear that he did not know Hana-ogi and that he supposed her to be merely some attractive street girl I had picked up for the day. He was therefore somewhat distressed when she spoke to him in Japanese, so I in-

upted and said, "I understand you have an unusual collection of prints of Hana-ogi, of Ogi-ya."

Immediately he withdrew deep inside himself and studied me carefully. Then he looked at Hana-ogi and bowed very low. "You are Hana-ogi-san of Takarazuka," said in precise English. "You are very beautiful. And I, Major, am Lloyd Gruver. Yes, yes. Even in Kyoto we have heard of you." I did not know whether he meant that he had heard of me as a flier or that he had heard of Hana-ogi and me, but he nodded formally and said, "I can truly appreciate your desire to see the famous prints of the dear Hana-ogi."

He led us upstairs, past the frowning Japanese heroes, and I felt that I was in hostile land. In this strange building I at last got the feeling of being an invader, surrounded by an alien religion and a strange art many centuries older than my own native land. I experienced the feeling even more deeply when I sat on the floor in front of an easel while the young curator went to a locked cabinet. Hana-ogi must have sensed my uneasy thoughts, for she put her hand in mine and whispered, "Now you see the greatest beauty."

I was totally unprepared for what I saw. I had developed a mental impression of the ancient Hana-ogi. She must have looked, I thought, something like my Hana-ogi: extraordinarily beautiful, yet with a distinctive oriental cast. I believed the pictures of her would look something like Botticellis.

I shall never forget the extreme shock of that first print. The young curator held it from me for a moment and said in reverence, "The first one is of Hana-ogi as a young girl, just come to Ogi-ya. It is by one of our finest artists, Shuncho." Then, bursting with pride and affection, he displayed the picture.

It was disgusting. The girl's face was pasty and flat. Her hair was a mass of yellow combs. She was swathed in seven kimonos that gaped at the neck. But worst of all, her eyes were caricatures, mere slants, and her teeth were

a horrid black. In this portrait of dead beauty I could not find one shred of loveliness.

I must have betrayed my disappointment for both Hana-ogi and the curator tried to explain that the design was controlled by Japanese artistic tradition, the way a portrait of a woman by Picasso does not appear really beautiful. I remember trying real hard to remember who Picasso was, but before I could get it they took away the first picture and brought in another by an artist whose name I didn't catch, but my dismay was greater than before. The famous courtesan had the same pasty face, slit eyes and funereal teeth, but this time her head was twisted into such an angle that I remember thinking, "If she doesn't straighten up she'll strangle." In her left hand she held one of the endless combs which she was jabbing into her mass of oily hair, and in her right she grasped a black ebony fan which made the whole picture look stupid. Even the half dozen kimonos were poorly painted and in odd colors.

It was the third picture which caused the argument. I took down the name of the artist, Masayoshi, for he showed Hana-ogi returning to the House of Ogi-ya after her elopement. She was dressed in many kimonos covered by a purple robe and followed by two barefoot servants carrying an umbrella and a massive bouquet of flowers. I studied the picture with dismay, for I recognized it immediately as one that Hana-ogi had described for me that night when she danced the story of her predecessor, but what she had not told me was that this picture of Hana-ogi showed a remarkably ugly woman with a big nose, dirt smears over her eyebrows and paunchy cheeks. "Why she's ugly!" I cried. I felt defrauded.

My Hana-ogi withdrew as if she had been struck and the young man pulled the print away. "I am afraid," he said in clipped syllables, "that you have no appreciation of our art."

"I was told that this Hana-ogi was the most beautiful woman in Japanese history."

"She was," the young man insisted.

"But these pictures . . ."

"It's our style of art," he explained.

"But look at Hana-ogi-san here. This one. She's really beautiful."

The young man did not look at Hana-ogi-san. Instead he took the portrait of the ancient Hana-ogi back to the cabinet and returned with another. Quietly he said, "I am afraid you are blind to the problem, Major. But would you like me to explain in a few words?"

"Indeed I would," I said.

"You'll forgive me if they're very simple words?"

"I will. I've heard so much of this Hana-ogi I don't want to go home disappointed."

"If you have a free mind," he assured me, "you will become elated. The picture I'm about to show you is by one of Japan's supreme artists, Utamaro. Have you heard of him?"

"No."

"No bother, but will you believe me when I say his work is prized all over the world? Good. You are going to see one of his loveliest creations. When you look at it do not think of Hana-ogi. Think only of this heavenly yellow."

He flashed the picture before me and the yellow was indeed like a fine sunlight. He continued his narration, pointing out the perfect proportions of the design, the exquisite line, the subdued color harmonies and the suggested textures. I followed him carefully and agreed with what he said. Then brusquely he said, "As for the face of Hana-ogi, we Japanese think it was sent down from heaven."

The intensity of his comment caught me unaware and from some distant corner of my brain came the affirmation, "The men who knew this woman thought she was beautiful." And immediately there came another terrible memory—of a time when some of us young officers were attending a wedding and we saw the bride and there was a moment of awful silence and somebody behind me whispered, "Well, every man thinks the girl he's marry-

to introduce my Hana-ogi to strangers who had never known her and I could feel them cringing away from my Japanese girl—unlovely to them—as I now cringed away from the long-dead Hana-ogi. I looked again at the treasured face, at the curious slanted eyes and the black teeth and from my own humility and the vanished green houses of the Yoshiwara came the assurance that she was beautiful. I said, "I think I understand."

The young man started to take the Utamaro away but I said, "Let me study it some more." I pointed to the colorful printing in the upper corner and asked what it was. During the remarkable discussion that followed the young curator stood crisply at attention with his left hand upon the easel. I have only to close my eyes to see him standing there with his faded echo of the great Hana-ogi.

"It's impossible to say what this printing means, Major. It's a poem, written by some unimportant man who visited Hana-ogi. These symbols are his name: The man from the other side of Yanagiwara. That's all we know about him, a stranger who came from a distant village and saw the great woman once. But his poem will live among us forever."

"What did he write?"

"I'm sorry but I cannot tell you the meaning."

"You can't translate the symbols?"

"Oh, yes!" he assured me proudly. "I was translator to our Foreign Office during the peace treaty at San Francisco. But the Japanese language like Japanese beauty and Japanese life can never be truly translated. For example, the name Hana-ogi means *flower* and *fan*, and its symbols are woven into the poem, but what they are intended to mean in this particular poem no one can say. The stranger from Yanagiwara himself did not know."

"What do you mean, he didn't know?"

"In Japan a man sees a beautiful woman and he expresses words, but they have no specific meaning."

"How can words have no specific meaning? There's the symbol. Right there. Why can't you read it?"

"Ah, but I can, Major. Trouble is, I can read it in so

many ways. According to one way the stranger from Yanagiwara is saying, 'Even a mere glimpse in autumn of that night-blooming flower, Hana-ogi, floods my soul with summer.'"

"That's clear enough," I said.

"But it isn't clear, because I'm only guessing that that's what the stranger meant, for the words can also be read, 'Hana-ogi is more beautiful than that evening flower I once laid on a bed for a time of old love and longing.'"

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for whom Hana-ogi now felt responsible. For a few minutes after leaving the museum I had feared that knowing my Hana-ogi's history might make it impossible for me to marry her, but one mention of her father ended such doubts, for I recalled the old Japanese farmer we had watched on that first night we had slept together. That was poverty, when a man sifted each grain of soil by hand to make it yield a little more rice. I knew that if Hana-ogi's father had sold her it was because he had no human alternative. I said with new dedication, "Now we'll get married," but she merely drew closer to me and I believe that she had taken me to Kyoto so that I might know of her childhood and that if the curator had not told me, she would have done so when we studied the pictures. With my right arm I drew her tumbled head to mine and drove the car quite slowly beside the ancient, turbulent river.

I was disturbed, however, that she had not yet actually said that she would come with me to America. I thought that she was hesitating in order to provide me with an escape from my wish promising to leave her in Japan. Then, in a dramatic way, I learned that Japanese law had determined not to marry me, for an elderly woman showed me Hana-ogi's picture and said that she was

TERMINAL: "These were the girls who were to be the first great Takarazuka stars. She had been, in her day,"

A gentle mask-faced Japanese woman came to the Little Banzai in Takarazuka accompanied by a smart young woman who spoke good English and they explained that they wished me to accompany them on a matter of greatest importance. I followed them to the itchi-bashi, then through the vegetable stalls and onto the footpath leading to the girls' dormitories.

This was the first time I had been on this path and as I approached the building where Hanna-ogi had lived before she met me I grew quite excited but then I saw the dormitory itself and it was forbidding: a plain wooden building covered with bamboo matting and protected by a row of cryptomeria trees planted to make a high hedge. The house was like a fortress and I was pleased at the respect of invading it.

But my guide didn't stop there. Instead, she led me down a narrow path past the cryptomeria trees and up to a small hill that overlooked the river. There she stopped at a curious gate that looked like the miniature entrance to a temple and after opening this she took me into a beautiful garden which surrounded a superior Japanese house made of highly polished wood. It was guarded by an enormous flat stone upon which sat nine young girls wearing the green skirts of the Takarazuka uniform. The girls jumped to their feet and bowed very low until the elderly woman had passed.

She led me to a room covered with exquisite white tatami and containing at one end a raised platform of matched cypress planks polished of a golden brown. It was obvious that this was the room of a dancing teacher.

The woman introduced herself as Teruko-san, one of the first great Takarazuka stars. She had been, in her day,

a legend and now she handed the legend down to the young girls waiting for her on the rock. They came to her five days a week and submitted themselves to the tyranny of her masklike face which now drew close to mine.

Teruko-san sat with me on the floor, arranging her kimono with precision, and I saw that her garments were five shades of gray matched in delicate harmony and accented by a single thin line of blue showing about the neck. Her tabi were white and accentuated the outlines of beautiful and powerful feet. They reminded me of Hana-ogi's superb feet and Teruko-san must have intended this, for she said promptly, "Major Gruver, if you cause Hana-ogi to leave us it is not only the great stage she will lose. It is also this." With a slow motion of her hand, as if she were participating in a dance, she indicated the perfect room, stopping with her finger pointed at a frame containing a massive motto written in strong characters by a great Japanese novelist.

She said, "Our motto: 'Be pure. Be right. Be beautiful.'"

Then she said, "When I die Hana-ogi is to follow me, for she is our finest dancer. I believe she is to be even greater than I, for when I danced I was alone and stood out like Fuji-san. But today there are many good dancers and Hana-ogi dominates them all. And do you know why they are good?"

I bowed deferentially toward her and she said, "Yes,

here, Major Gruver, for I am to give a lesson," and the interpreter went to fetch the nine young girls. They came in quietly, practiced little steps on the tatami then deftly dropped away their green skirts and climbed onto the low stage in bright dancing tights.

Teruko-san was transformed. Instead of a gracious elderly lady she became a vigorous, stage-stamping dancer much better than even her best pupil. She led them through one single step for a long time and I detected one or two girls who looked as if they might honestly become dancers and I realized that Teruko-san had intended that I see in these struggling children—they were fifteen I judged—the Hana-ogi of some years back and as I looked at these lovely faces now perspiring as Hana-ogi did when she had run through the alleys to our home, I could imagine the days and years she had studied.

When the girls left, Teruko-san said, "I have wanted you to understand exactly what you are doing." She led me to the gate and to my surprise dismissed the interpreter and walked with me back to the dormitory, which was deserted in the late afternoon. She nodded to the guard and took me to a small room, pushed aside the paper door and told me to enter saying, "Hana-ogi."

The room was as beautiful as the girl I loved. Along one wall were the lacquered drawers and trays and chests in which she kept her belongings. The rest of the room was bare and clean and glittering. There were eight creamy white tatami, so it was not a big room, and six bright cushions around a very old brazier of gold and green ceramic in which charcoal rested on a pile of gleaming white sand. A low table and four jet-black bowls for food completed the furniture except for one shelf which held copies of the plays Hana-ogi had acted in. The only ornamentation was a single Japanese print in excellent colors of a bridge suspended in the moonlight over a rocky gorge with a crescent moon low in the sky. I felt that I was growing to understand Japanese prints, and the more I understood them the more I liked them.

But this time Teruko-san had been too clever, for had been her intention that I see this room and learn that I was taking Hana-ogi from it; but it had quite the opposite effect. The room cried out in the late afternoon shadows that I should go ahead and marry its owner, a woman so vital as Hana-ogi could be destined for so soon a prison. The wood of the room was beautiful, Hana-ogi was more so. The tatami were neat, the beds were important and the Japanese print no doubt represented one of the peaks of art—but so did Hana-ogi, in addition she was a glorious woman, one who delighted in hurrying through the dark alleys of Osaka to the man she loved.

But if her room gave me permission to love her, what I saw next gave me a direct order to do so, for as Teruko-san and I passed down the hall from Hana-ogi's room, I happened to look through sliding doors that were open and saw the room next to Hana-ogi's.

It was remarkable in that it was also of only elegant tatami, but it was crowded with dolls and fluffy bears and pillows edged with pink and blue lace streamers and tables with birds out of glass and corners filled with delightful odds and ends. It was the room of a young girl who enjoyed all aspects of life and it abounded with that happy clutter so loved by people who don't have to make up their minds. I looked at Teruko-san and said, "Fumiko-san." Then she pointed to the table, round and exquisitely carved in the ornate Chinese style, with no English at her command told me that that was the table Fumiko-san's father used when he committed hara-kiri in the debacle of August, 1945. The room frightened me and I wanted to get out of it.

At the entrance to the dormitory I bowed very low and said, "Domo arigato gozaimasu, Teruko-san." She was pleased that I spoke even that trivial Japanese, so I bowed equally low and said, "Do itashi mashite, do itashi," and I hurried to the train that would take me back to Osaka just as fast as possible.

How can I recall the journey of a young man?

ately in love as he moves across the picture-book landscape of Japan to a city of canals where he will meet his beloved? My train crossed the Muko River and I could see the Bitchi-bashi, where I had often waited for Hana-ogi and where young girls now passed swirling their green skirts. For a few seconds I followed the footpath that led to the dormitory and here four of the great stars walked arm in arm. At the dormitory itself I saw Fumiko-san entering the dark and towering wall of cryptomerias.

Now I was in the countryside and I could see the rice fields crowding right up to the last inch of railroad tie. Beyond were the trim clean villages with roofs of red tile and temple roofs of golden tile. In the fields were old men pulling harrows and women digging, while along the village streets children laughed and played loud jumping games.

There was a momentary thrill as the train pulled into the junction town of Nishinomiya, for I knew that when I looked across the station platform I would see a gigantic poster for *Swing Butterfly* with a huge picture of Hana-ogi in the middle. I spent my time waiting for the through express, wondering what the people on the platform would think if they could have known that in a few endless minutes I would be with Hana-ogi and she would be slipping into a gray and blue kimono so that she could sit upon the floor with me for a bowl of cold fish and vinegar rice?

The express from Kobe roared in and I avoided the coach where the officers of General Webster's command sat very formally in freshly pressed uniforms. Instead I sought out a back car from which I caught glimpses of the Inland Sea and soon we came to where the river emptied into the sea through great concrete culverts, and promptly we entered Osaka itself, where the train plunged through a canyon of ugly houses hung with laundry and into a tunnel which brought me to the noisy, crowded station. As I approached the canal I was alive with excitement. I was young and I was coming to the end of a journey that I wished I might make each day of my life:

from Takarazuka to Osaka, where Hana-ogi was wait-

And when I reached home the wonder of my journey was increased, for there was Hana-ogi waiting for me with the news that Joe had driven a colonel to Tokyo and that Katsumi would be gone for two days on business of his own. Once more we had a home to ourselves. I slipped into my blue-and-white cotton kimono and shared the fish and rice with her. When the meal was over I said, "Teruko-san came to see me today. She showed me the dancing school. The one that could be yours some day. Now I know why you want to stay at Takarazuka."

She sighed and said she was glad that I understood why she could not come with me to America, but I added, "And I also saw your little room. With the lovely picture. I made my hands fall like the gorge in her solitary picture. At this she blushed and held her hand against her stray-hair sideburns along her cheek. I said, "And when I saw that bare room which holds you like a prisoner—life—no one to love . . ."

I caught her in my arms and a tremendous surge of love attacked us and later when I lay upon the tatami watching her select her clothes for tomorrow I said, "We'll be married as soon as possible. You'll love New York. You can see hundreds of shows, some like Takarazuka but none of the actresses will be beautiful like you."

I was imagining her in New York, so I rose and showed her how she could pull the wanton hair that crept up her cheeks up into place. She did so and studied herself in a mirror. "Now you look like an American girl," I said. She pulled the hair back down and said, "Japanese women are more better." But I convinced her that if she wanted to she could look almost American, so she tucked her hair in and the Japanese sideburns were gone. This sounded strange, but I believe that on a New York street few would recognize that she was from Japan.

PHARMACIST'S MATE: "In Kobo there's this guy who can straighten her eyes for eight bucks."

In the morning I begged her to stay with me to the last minute, but she insisted upon leaving early and asked me to call a taxi. I recall the language we had finally invented for ourselves:

Hana-ogi: Rroyd-san, you takushi preeze. (Please get a taxi.)

I: Daijobu, I takushi, get, ne? (All right, I'll get one.)

Hana-ogi: I rike stay with you. Keredomo I train go, honto. (But I must catch the train, really.)

I: More sukoshi stay, kudasai. (Stay a little longer, please.)

Hana-ogi: Dekinai, Rroyd-san. No can stay. (I'm sorry. I can't stay.)

I: Do shi'te, whatsahurry? (Hey, why hurry?)

Hana-ogi: Anone! Takarazuka, my job-u, ne? I job-u go, ne? (Listen, I have a job.)

I: Chotto, chotto goddamn mattel Takarazuka ichi-ji start now. Ima only 10 o'clock, ne? (Wait a minute!)

Hana-ogi: Anone! Rroyd-san, you mess my hair, ne? I beauty saron go, make nice, desho? (Desho is the sweet meaningless word which makes the sentences of Japanese girls musical and tender.)

I: No, no, no. Anone! You takusan steky now. (Listen! You're plenty pretty now.)

But she left, nevertheless, and my last warning was that she must have her hair done American style. Toward evening Joe blew in with some Suntory, the Japanese whisky we had both come to like so much, and we had a quiet celebration while we waited for the girls and pretty soon Hana-ogi arrived in her new hair-do. It was a transformation. "Wow!" I cried. "She could walk down Fifth Avenue and knock them all dead." She blushed nervously

and I believe she would have been pleased with her American look except that Katsumi arrived and ruined everything.

She had bandages over her eyes and peered out through slits. Joe immediately guessed that she had been in an accident but I remember looking with a certain agony at Hana-ogi and muttering to myself, "Oh, damn it to hell! She's gone and had that lousy operation!"

And I was right. Dear, good Katsumi wanted more than anything else to look like an American. Then Joe would be proud when he took her home; so on the first day he had left her alone she had sneaked over to the quack doctor in Kobe. For eight dollars he had slashed her upper lids to make the Mongolian fold fall back into place. He had performed this operation over a thousand times and sometimes his remodeling enabled girls to lose their Japanese look completely.

Proudly Katsumi stood before us and dropped away her bandages. Joe cried, "What have you done?"

Even more proudly the little girl opened her eyes slowly, one by one. "Now I have good eyes," she said.

The result was horrible. I gasped and Hana-ogi looked away. But Joe just stood there. He was about six feet from her when she turned to face him and he could see that what had been a glorious and typical Japanese face was now a conglomeration. I was watching Joe but no one could ever guess what he thought just then. Once he started to speak but stopped. Then he went over and kissed his wife and said, "By damn, Katsumi, you look more like an American than I do."

"I so proud," she said, dropping her new face against his arms.

There was a moment of silent intensity in the room and then Hana-ogi said, "Rroyd-san, we walk take, ne?" Joe looked at me and asked belligerently, "Whatsamatta, anythin' wrong?" and I replied, "Nothing at all. I think Katsumi looks swell."

But as soon as Hana-ogi and I reached the canal she cried, "Why she do that? She not proud to be Japanese?"

Deftly she thrust her two forefingers onto her upper lids and pulled them up into mere slits, crying, "I like Japanese eye. I like!" Then she started to sob and I tried to comfort her, but she pushed me away and with strong fingers clawed down the strands of hair that I had tucked up and they fell upon her cheeks in the Japanese style. As she did this her fingernails caught in her flesh and a thin stream of blood trickled down to her chin. I tried to wipe it away but she cried, "I proud to be Japanese. I not want to be American. I like Tokyo, not New York."

I had to stand there in the cool night and watch her slapping at her face until the blood stopped. Then she turned to me defiantly and said, "You no like Japanese girl, eh? You ashamed Japanese face. You want me cut my eyes, too?"

I put my arm about her and kissed the torn skin. I said, "When you pulled your eyes far up you looked like the Utamaro print. You were beautiful. But that day in Kyoto I wasn't prepared for such beauty."

I was about to say more when she clutched my arm and whispered, "Ssssh!" pointing to a group of young streetwalkers lounging by the canal. They were the unlucky ones who had not been able to grab onto a G.I. for the night. Osaka was a leave city for our troops in Korea and had accumulated more streetwalkers than any other city in the world, so that any one girl's chances were slim. They recognized Hana-ogi and gathered about her.

"Is it true," they asked, "that you are marrying an American?"

When she said she didn't know they were depressed, for to them the highest dream they could envisage was to trap a G.I. who might take them to the States, but they knew there was little chance, for American chaplains and Japanese secret police investigated all girls, and prostitutes were weeded out. Unemployed for the night, they pressed in on Hana-ogi and asked, "Have you a picture?" She had none, so they produced strips of paper on which she printed her name in the Chinese characters used for

all names. One of the girls studied her signature and asked, "What's your real name, Hana-ogi?"

At first the actress refused to say, then, feeling deep in the Japanese mood, she said softly, "My name was Kaji. Immediately the girl touched Hana-ogi on the wrist and cried, "You are kaji, kaji!" Then she twisted her hand high into the air.

I asked what this meant and Hana-ogi said, "In Japanese my real name means fire."

One of the girls who knew English struck a lighter, some G.I. had given her and cried, "Fire, fire!"

Another girl quickly called, "Cigaretto, Major?" passed a package around and in the night I could see a ring of little flames, and later Hana-ogi said defiantly, "I am proud to be an actress for such girls—for all the girls in Nihon."

When the streetwalkers had departed I resumed my argument and asked, "What did you mean when you say you didn't know if you were marrying an American?"

She made a sign with her hands, like a flame falling through night air, and said, "The fire goes out."

"No!" I cried. "There are some fires that never go out."

She leaned against a tree growing near the canal and said, "Long ago Teruko-san loved the Supervisor. They were very happy and were going to commit suicide at Kegon Falls. But they didn't and now he's a famous man and she's a famous woman and they meet sometimes and have tea. She speak me today."

"But the flame didn't go out—or she'd have forgotten. Believe me, the flame was still there."

Then she said an astonishing thing. "You'll go home and marry Eileen . . ."

"Eileen?" I cried. "Where did you hear . . ." I had never spoken her name.

"Yes," she said. "You marry Eileen (she pronounced Eireen) your father tell me."

"My father?"

"Yes. General Hot Shot Harry. He come see me late one night."

Bitterly I kicked the earth, for I could feel my father ordering things again. "Did he talk you into this?" I demanded.

"No! He say if I want to marry you O.K., but he know I never do it."

"What did he tell you?"

"He very nice, very kind man. He speak you marry Eileen. I think so too."

I pleaded, "Don't believe what he said. Years ago he dragged me into a life . . . I've done all right but it was never my decision."

She touched the insignia on my blouse and asked, "You no happy? Air Force?"

I cried, "It's been one life . . . I've liked it . . . But there could be others."

She grasped my hand tightly and said, "Sometimes I have been afraid of you because you are in uniform. My brother was in uniform and he became cruel. Your army hang him. I am afraid of uniforms." Then she put her head on my shoulder and said, "But you—your father—good men."

I was deeply agitated and struggled desperately to get down—for once in my life—to the hard bed rock of living. I said, "Hanayo, you are the hope of my life. If you leave me all the things . . ."

She said in Japanese, "I know, Rroyd. For me you are also the key. With you I could become a woman and a mother and we could travel in London. I could love you and help you . . ."

She became exquisitely tender and I knew then that with her as my wife I could find the solid basis for existence that had so far escaped me; and I was aware that for her, too, I was the only escape she could ever know. If she rejected me now she could become only the glorious outline of a woman, imprisoned in little rooms or on mammoth stages—loved only by other women.

I lifted her in the air and cried, "Then we'll be married?"

She stared at me and said "No."

dropped her gently to the bank and kissed her im-
live, golden face, thinking bitterly of the stories I had
about white men in strange lands. Always the yellow
tried to seduce these clean-cut men away from their
ent white sweethearts, for everyone knew that yellow
s plotted evil ways to lure white men. And if the
ow girls succeeded the white men sank lower and
er toward barbarism. "Damn it," I cried, "this story's
loused up!" When Hana-ogi looked up in surprise I
d, "I'm a West Point honor man. In the story you're sup-
sed to beg me to marry you. Hanayo-chan, please beg

She started to laugh at my comic plea, but then I think
e glimpsed the empty years that faced her, for she
ok my hands and held them to her face, confessing in a
me of Japanese doom, "I don't want to become the
nely old woman who teaches dancing." (I recall her
ords: "I not grad be woman old in house dance teach
o man come.")

Her lament burned my heart and I cried, "Then marry
ne."

This time she answered in a lower voice, still freighted
with that inevitable sense of tragedy that seems to haunt
the Japanese, "I never intended marrying you, Rroyd-san.
Japanese-American marriages are no good. We read about
Japanese girls in America—what happened in Cedar
Rapids."

"When why did you come to live with me?" I de-
manded in anguish.

She pressed her lovely head against mine and said
softly in Japanese, "I know it was wrong. But for me it
was my only chance in life to love a man. No Japanese
man would marry me—what the man in museum told
you. Oh, maybe a fish-catch boy or a rice-plant boy,
maybe such a man would have me. But Japanese men are
very cruel to wives like me. Rroyd-san, in all the world
you were the only man I dare love."

She started to cry, the bitter lament for a section of her
life coming to an end at age twenty-nine. It was hellish to

be there with her, to hear her committing herself to the inverted world of the Takarazuka girls and the green, flowing skirts and me to airplanes and the management of war. I grasped her hands and cried, "Hanayo-chan! Please! It's our lives you're speaking of. Marry me!"

Limply and in despair she drew her hands away. Then, raising her arms as if to embrace the entire sleeping city of Osaka she said with tragic finality, "I Japanese. I always Japanese. I never be happy nowhere." (As she said it: "I nebber be grad.") Then the misery of her heart overcame her and she started to cry again. Looking down, to keep her tears from me, she saw one of the crumpled Kodak envelopes used by the P.X.'s in Japan. One of the prostitutes, photographed by some soldier lover, had discarded it. Delicately Hana-ogi stooped for the orange paper and pressed it out. Then with an aching beautiful hand she pointed to the trademark used by Kodak in Japan: that tremendous and sacred statue of Buddha at Kamakura, the ancient capital. Its vast, impassive face was enshrined as a symbol of the Japanese nation and slowly Hana-ogi's hand left it and indicated her own symbolic face with its beautiful Japanese eyes and classic mouth. "One poet say my face same like this face of Kamakura. I very proud." Then in a tender, forgiving gesture she pointed to our dark alley and asked sadly, "Katsumi-san marry American boy, ne? What happen to her, desho?"

The answer to that one arrived next day in the form of a special Fourth of July present for Joe Kelly, our overseas hero. We had celebrated the holiday by sneaking out into the country with a couple of picnic baskets. In the distance we had heard fireworks going off in some village near Kyoto and Katsumi had said, "Japanese love to celebrate. Even American holidays we enjoy." But when we got back to Osaka, Joe found the fateful letter tucked under the door. We had all known it must arrive soon but even so we were unprepared. Joe's hands trembled as he read the bad news.

"They sending you home?" I asked.

"Yep," he said weakly.

He showed me the sheet of paper which I at once recognized as one not intended for enlisted men to see, and my West Point training welled up. "How'd you get hold of this?"

"A friend of a friend," he said.

I read the impersonal phrases which two months before would have meant nothing to me. "American military personnel married to Japanese wives will be rotated home immediately lest their allegiance to the United States be eroded." Farther down it said, "This applies especially to personnel whose marriages have occurred since April 1, 1952." Then there was the usual baloney passage about commanders providing every assistance to men who must make unusual arrangements for wives forced to remain in Japan.

Joe asked bitterly, "What do they mean by unusual arrangements? Getting her a job in a good whore house?"

"Joe, take it easy!"

"It ain't easy to take."

"Joe, I've seen hundreds of orders like this. They all peter out."

"I think they mean it this time, Ace. Should I write to my Congressman?"

In spite of my original feelings on this point I now said, "Take it clear to the President, Joe." I turned and kissed blackened-eyes Katsumi on the cheek and said, "I wish we had a million gals like you back home."

Joe said, "This is important to you, Ace, because one of these days you may be tryin' to bring Hanayo into the States."

"I'm already trying," I said. Then desperately I added, "Hanayo can't make up her mind but I started the paper work this morning. Just in case." I noticed that Hana-ogi gasped at this and was about to protest, but Joe interrupted by pointing to the corners of the wood-and-paper house.

"I had it good here," he said grimly. "Wonderful wife, baby comin', friends, a home. Well, that's the way the ball

bounces." As he surveyed the impending ruin he took refuge in the phrase which our men across Korea had adopted as their reaction to the dismal tricks of war: "That's the way the ball bounces."

For Joe the ball took an evil twist. An implementing letter arrived next day with a cold, hard list of the men who were to be sent home and under the K's Joe found his name. He took the list immediately to Lt.Col. Craford, who said, "I told you you were goin' home. I got our men on that list. Everyone of 'em's been in to cry the blues."

"But my wife is havin' a baby."

"All wives have babies. That's what wives are for."

"Can I be transferred back to Korea?"

The colonel grunted, "You're the fourth guy who would rather go back to war in Korea than go home to the States. You really prefer Korea?"

Joe saw a chance to remain in the area and cried eagerly, "Yes!"

Lt.Col. Craford turned away in disgust and said, "It's disgraceful when a man prefers Japan to America, but when he'd rather go back to Korea it's insanity."

"Then I can go?" Joe begged.

"No!" Craford shouted. "You get to hell home. All of you Jap-lovers, get home where you belong." He looked at Joe's papers and asked, "Where is your home?"

Joe said, "Osaka."

Craford flushed and said, "I mean your real home."

"Osaka," Joe repeated doggedly.

Craford banged the desk and shouted, "You get out of here. I oughta court-martial you."

Without thinking Joe caught him up on it. "Would that mean I could say in Japan?"

Craford became apoplectic and sputtered, "All right, wise guy. All right. When the shipping list comes out you won't have to look. Because your name is gonna be first."

When Joe reported all this I got sore. I've watched my father deal with hundreds of human problems and al-

puts men first. In France there was a saying in his outfit: "If your wife is dying, don't bother with the colonel. He'll say no. See General Gruver. He'll say yes." So I told Joe, "You hate the military, kid, but this isn't standard. I'll fight this all the way to General Webster."

I caught the train to Kobe and when we stopped at Nishinomiya there was the poster of Hana-ogi smiling down at me.

General Webster didn't smile. For the first three minutes he never gave me a chance to get a word in. "Who in hell do you think was just in here?" he concluded. "The Supervisor of the Keihanshin Kyuko Railroad!" He waited for this to take effect, but I didn't comprehend, so he said in disgust, "The railroad that runs the theater where you've distinguished yourself—beyond the call of duty."

I waited for the explosion but there was none. General Webster smiled pleasantly and said, "It's all been settled. The Japanese-American scandal has been solved by the Webster-Ishikawa negotiations." He bowed and said, "His name was Ishikawa."

Mimicking a diplomat he continued, "The terms of the Webster-Ishikawa treaty are these." He handed me a sheaf of stapled papers and said, "You fly back to Randolph Field. The actress girl goes to Tokyo."

"When?" I cried.

"Both of you exit these parts on July 10—five days."

Then, to my amazement, he insisted that I have lunch with him, and when we got to the Officers Club Mrs. Webster and Eileen were waiting. We conducted ourselves with the punctilious indifference you give a man who has returned from a leprosarium, but Mrs. Webster was too old a veteran of the social battlefields to play such a game for long. Her opening salvo was, "Have you seen this month's show at Takarazuka? The girl who plays the lead is lovely."

I was still sore about the way Joe Kelly was being treated, so I said to myself, "If all bets are off, here goes,"

and I said aloud, "I know the girl and she's very talented, but I came to Kobe to try to argue your husband into letting Private Kelly remain in Japan."

"Who's Private Kelly?" Mrs. Webster asked.

"His Japanese wife is having a baby and he's being sent home—without her."

The general grew red in the face and tried to change the subject but Eileen jumped in on my side, "Rotten trick, I'd say."

Her father said, "Don't scowl at me. It's an area order."

"What happens to the baby?" Eileen asked.

The general laid down his napkin and said, "I argued with Kelly for half an hour, warning him not to marry a Japanese girl."

This did not satisfy Eileen who asked, "Does the Army force them to desert their wives? Aren't they legally married?"

"Yes, they're legally married," snapped the general. "We have to allow them to get married and then we have to leave the wife stranded."

"This is serious," Eileen protested. "Doesn't anyone try to prevent such inhuman foolishness?"

General Webster addressed Eileen directly, "I argued with this boy. Lloyd argued with him. Where'd it get us?"

But Eileen said, "I'm not talking about what has happened. I'm talking about the injustice of what's going to happen."

Mrs. Webster interrupted and asked, "How are you involved in this, Lloyd?"

I took a deep breath and said, "Kelly's from my outfit in Korea." (From the corner of my eye I saw the general sigh with relief that I had not embarrassed him by mentioning Hana-ogi, but I had no intention of avoiding the issue.) "And it also happens that I'm planning to marry a Japanese girl myself."

I had dropped my napalm. The general gulped. Mrs. Webster blushed an absolute scarlet and Eileen put her

hand on mine and said, "I always knew you had guts."

I said, "Thanks, I guess I'd better go now."

Mrs. Webster asked weakly, "The actress?"

"Yes."

The general said, "Lloyd's not marrying any actress. He's being sent home on Thursday."

I started to leave but Eileen insisted upon walking to the door with me, as if I were the girl and she the escort. "I'm proud of you, Lloyd," she said. "I wish you all the luck in the world." We shook hands and I thought of a dozen things to say but none of them made much sense, so I said, "I'm sorry we got things loused up," and she said, "It was mostly my fault," and then as I was leaving she laughed and said, "Remember the time I asked you if you ever felt like just grabbing me and hauling me off to some shack?"

We both smiled awkwardly at this and she said, "That's just about what you did, wasn't it? But with somebody else." She kissed me on the cheek and said good-naturedly, "Well, I'm glad you turned out to be a man and not a mouse."

When I got back home I found Joe and Katsumi alone in a kind of dull panic. "I been all over it with everybody," he said. "Even went to see the consul, but everyone flashes the marriage papers at you and says, 'You signed 'em. You knew you couldn't take her to America.' As if that made everything just dandy."

Since I already knew that his name was at the head of the list I hadn't the courage to ask him what the latest hot dope was, but he came out with it, "I'm first on the first draft."

Katsumi, saying nothing, prepared the meal while I watched the door for Hana-ogi. She arrived about seven and I could tell that she had already been ordered to Tokyo. She had a nervousness about her that I had not seen before and I wondered if she was aware that I was being flown home. We looked at each other for a moment as she kicked off her zori and then neither of us could

continue the duplicity. She ran weeping across the tatami and cried, "Rroyd, Rroyd! I Tokyo go five days!"

I caught her in my arms and hugged her as if I intended to crush her then so that she could never escape. "I fly back to Texas right away."

She pushed me away and cried, "You leave Japan?" I nodded and she burst into sobs, calling to Katsumi in Japanese. The two girls stood in the middle of the room and looked at Joe and me and for the four of us the world slowly fell apart.

There is one Japanese custom I had grown to love and Hana-ogi fled to this as relief from the tension of my crumbling home. She went to the bath corner and started a charcoal fire raging under the huge square water tub. When the water was hot she called, "Come in Ryōka-san. I scrub your back."

I went into the little room where steam enveloped me and washed down with soap, rinsing myself off before I climbed into the tub. The water was almost scalding and Hana-ogi took a kind of soft bark and scrubbed my back for twenty minutes while we talked of that day's decisions.

When my headache had been soaked away she soaped herself down, rinsed off and took my place while I scrubbed her back. As soon as we exited Joe and Katsumi took over and at nine we were all sitting cross-legged about the sukiyaki bowl while Katsumi served us an excellent meal. Hana-ogi said, "We never forget this time," and the warmth of the bath, the vigor of the scrubbing and the good friendship of our home made us ignore for a while the penalties that hung over our heads. I think we all knew that never again in our lifetimes would we know quite the same intense friendship and love that we shared that night and Joe said glumly, "I hate to think of livin' in some Chicago roomin' house—waitin'."

Toward midnight the inescapable gloom of our position settled firmly upon our little house so that Hana-ogi and I felt we had to break free and walk in the cool night air. The stars over Osaka were the same that had shone upon America seven hours earlier: Vega and Arcturus and Altair. They recognized no national barriers and I found myself—an officer sworn to protect the United States—thinking that some day we might catch up with the stars.

But as so often is the case, no sooner had I entertained this fleeting thought than I willingly became more of an American than I had ever been before. For at the head of our alley appeared a large gang of toughs screaming, "Americans go home! America go to hell! Go home!"

They swarmed down the alley in frenzy. When they reached the house of Masako Fukada, the girl with the G.I. baby, they knocked the door in and dragged her into the street, screaming, "Kill the American bastard."

Before I could do anything, Hana-ogi dashed toward the center of the infuriated mob. Although she was risking her life at Takarazuka, and more besides, she dived for Masako, who was being kicked in the stomach, and threw herself across the girl's body.

This enraged the hoodlums, who waved their torches and shouted in high-pitched voices that Hana-ogi should be killed for going with an American. I started for them but Hana-ogi cried a warning to stay away. This caused the mob to turn toward me and in the lurid light of their flickering torches these fanatical faces looked exactly like the cartoons of the Japanese barbarians we had kept posted in our ready rooms during the war years. I remember one horrible face rushing at me. It was distorted, evil, brutal and inhuman.

"You're for me, you Japanese bastard!" I cried and launched a dive at his belly. Another Japanese swung a club upward at the same moment and I thought my head had been knocked away, but my momentum carried me on and I crashed into the ring leader and felt the wonderful impact of my body against his and the thudding fall onto the ground with him uttering a shaken grunt. I started to smash at his distorted and hateful face. At the same time I had sense enough to shout, "Hey, Joel!"

The little tough burst right through his own paper doors brandishing a rifle butt. He flailed a path to me and we tried to defend ourselves, but I was bleeding from the face and started to faint.

"For Christ sake," the little gangster cried. "Not now! We got 'em runnin'."

The next second he collapsed under three Japanese clubs and I fainted. Later I learned that the anti-American mob would have killed us except for the pachinko players. They were at the canal end of the alley, sitting gloomily in the dark after the closing of the pinball parlor and one of them to whom I used to speak in English when I played pachinko heard Joe shout my name. They realized we were in trouble and they knew we were their friends.

Little Watanabe-san and the man who was keeping two geishas and the man whose wife beat him and the man who beat his wife and the man who had been in penitentiary rushed up the alley. I am told there was a violent battle, but I knew nothing of it. The last thing I saw was a Japanese face—not one of the evil masks, Hana-ogi's oval and yellow beauty as she lay fearful with her eyes closed across the body of unconscious Masako Fukada.

When they brought me to I heard little Joe repeat quietly, "No, no! Don't send for an Army doctor. Call a Jap doctor." He was explaining to one of the pachinko players, "I learned it in Chicago. Never call a cop. Cops never help anybody." When I awakened, with a terrible streak of bruised face, I saw Hana-ogi again. She said I was not hurt." Immediately I felt better and as the night progressed I began to feel absolutely good. Her house was crowded with alley people. They sat on the floor in kimonos or sat cross-legged on the floor, talking and sipping their tea and sipping the green tea that Watanabe-san served them. They said, all of them and with great emphasis, "The hoodlums who attacked you—they were not Japanese. They were Korean communists. We are Japanese. We are your friends." I remember one young man, a tough, capable laborer who still wore the peaked cap of the Japanese army. I had played pachinko with him and had given his four children presents. He spoke in mumbled tones and knew no English but he said, "They weren't all Koreans. Many Japanese hate you Americans. But I fought against you in Guadalcanal."

thought: "In those days you'd have beheaded me.") "And you have behaved much better in Japan than I expected. Now I am your friend. Those in the street, they were communists."

All the same, next day Masako-san and her American baby left our alley and we never heard of them again. Masako's mother stood in the roadway cursing the girl for having caused the riot and the other women of the alley looked away.

That was Sunday. On Monday the Air Force officially notified Joe that he would be flown back to America on Wednesday. To Joe it was the sentence of torture. I found him sitting cross-legged on the floor studying the notice with dull resignation. He looked up grimly and asked, "Why should I be punished? Why should I have to go back to the States?"

Automatically I replied, "The way the ball bounces."

"No!" he shouted. "What's there for me in America?"

I assured him, "You'll get out of the Air Force and find a job and pretty soon Katsumi'll follow you."

He looked at me sadly and said, "I wish it was goin' to be so simple."

I recall every incident of that powerful and uneventful day. I drifted out to Itami to wind up my paper work and have lunch with Mike Bailey who told me, "My affair with Fumiko-san is washed up cleaner than a sergeant's shirt on inspection. She said she was afraid something bad would happen. Suicide, broken life, unwanted baby. She said such things occurred in her family beause they were aristocrats and took life awful hard. She said Hana-ogi was the kind of girl to be. Strong and brave."

I went over to Takarazuka for my mail and found a letter from my father which said, "I follow the war news more intelligently since my talk with you. No doubt your attractive little Butterfly has told you I called on her that night. You're lucky to have known such a fine girl. I have hopes Mother and I shall see you in Lancaster one day soon. Until then, I am profoundly proud of a son who can bag seven enemy planes. Harry."

In mid-afternoon I caught the train into Osaka and once more experienced an overpowering sense of identification with this strange land. The fields I saw could have been fields that Hana-ogi and I were working. The old people were her parents and the fat young babies were ours. The endless struggle for life was our struggle.

Once when Joe Kelly had cried, "I don't want to go back to America," I was on the point of knocking him down as an unpatriotic moron. Now, on the Takarazuka train, I knew that a man can have many homes and one of them must be that place on earth, however foreign, where he first perceives that he and some woman could happily become part of the immortal passage of human beings over the face of the earth: the childbearers, the field tillers, the builders, the fighters and eventually the ones who die and go back to the earth.

I had discovered this passionate emotion in Hana-ogi's country and for me—a United States officer bred on patriotism—the crowded fields between Takarazuka and Osaka, the insignificant canals, the tiny house, the tatami mats and the bed roll unfurled at night would be forever one of my homes.

This haunting sensation stayed with me as I walked through Osaka that sunny afternoon for on passing a print shop I saw in the window an old wood-block portrait of some classic beauty of Japan. She had a mound of black hair with big yellow combs stuck through, and she reminded me of that day in the Kyoto museum. Instinctively, I stepped inside the tiny shop and bowed to the proprietor. "Do you happen to have a wood-block print of Hana-ogi?" I asked. I wanted to take her with me when I left Japan. The proprietor grew quite mournful and indicated that he had no English, but in a while he was out in the street shouting and soon the inevitable girl who had learned the language from sleeping with American soldiers appeared.

"What you want, Major?" she asked.

"I'd like a picture of Hana-ogi."

"Ah, so desu-kal" The man hurried back to a case and

soon appeared with six of the glossy photographs sold at Takarazuka. They showed my Hana-ogi as a sheik, a Venetian gondolier, a Chinese prince and as three other handsome young men. I bowed very low and said, "I did not mean that Hana-ogi. I meant . . ." and I pointed to the picture in the window.

"Sodal" cried the man.

"Ah, soka, soka!" cried the girl, and they indicated by their manner that if I were interested in such a picture I was one of them. Two hangers-on in the store joined us as the man shuffled through a stack of prints. Finally he produced one, a brilliant thing with iridescent black background showing Hana-ogi upon the day of her return to the green cages of Yoshiwara: glorious with amber needles through her hair and many kimonos. Her eyes were notably slanted and tinged with blue, her teeth were jet black and the hair around her ear came down in sideburns. She was timeless and she was Japan.

The little street girl said, "This picture not real. Only copy. But very old. Maybe one hunner years." The men watching sucked in their breath and complimented me as I carried away the living memory of Hana-ogi.

THE NOODLE VENDOR: "Soba, soba,
soba."

seems strange, but I can remember each of the trivial
things that filled this lovely Japanese day. When I en-
tered our alley I passed the pachinko parlor and stuck
my head in to thank the men who had helped me in my
struggle with the communists, but most of them were so
crossed in their pinball games that they scarcely
looked up. I then crossed the alley to the flower shop and
indicated that I wanted a bouquet for our house. The lit-
tle man—I keep using that word because these men
are really so very small—started a cascade of Japanese,
then went to the street and shouted till a boy came. Al-
ways, in Japan, there is someone who knows English.
This boy explained that since I must soon go back to
America, the flower man wanted to give me three most
special flowers. When the shopkeeper handed them to
me they looked like the ordinary flowers that American
kids wear to football games. I had often bought them
from Eileen Webster but now the boy said, sucking in his
breath in astonishment, "Very unusual, chrysanthemum
blooming in July." He added that this was the national
flower of Japan and looked with absolute covetousness as
I took them from the flower man.

Thinking little of the gift I carried the flowers to our
house, but as soon as the girls saw them they sucked in
their breath just as the boy had done, and Katsumi ran
to the street to announce that we had chrysanthemums
in July. Soon our little room was filled with neighbors
who sat upon their ankles staring at the three wonderful
blooms. From time to time new men would arrive, bow
to Hana-ogi, sit upon the floor and contemplate this mi-
raculous accomplishment. Even Watanabe-san left his
pachinko to see. The boy who had been my translator

joined us and explained this strange thing: "On the road to Kobe a florist has a big glass house in which he grows these flowers. In one section there are cloth blinds to keep out the sun. With an almanac to guide him, this clever man causes the sun to set earlier each day so that within the space of three weeks it seems to run the course of four months. The flowers are fooled. They think that autumn is upon them and they bloom." The men sucked in their breath in admiration.

Now Katsumi suddenly felt the first life in her womb and fell slightly forward. Hana-ogi washed her forehead in cold water and Joe, faced by the necessity of leaving his pregnant wife behind in Japan said loudly, "I hope just one thing. I hope Colonel Craford goes home and buys himself a new Buick, light blue, and I hope he's drivin' it down the avenue when I'm comin' up the other way with a Mack truck."

I was about to caution Joe against taking a pass at Craford when I looked up to see Hana-ogi arranging her kimono. It was blue and white, very soft for summer wear. With it she wore two undergarments of thinnest cloth: pink silk and white cotton. I thought I had never seen her so lovely. Unmindful of me she experimented with the sheer lines of her garments until she brought them into a pattern which made her more beautiful than the picture I had bought. I was about to share this with her when she raised both hands and combed down the hair about her face so that it rested in the Japanese style. Studying herself in the mirror, she nodded approval. Then she heard me laugh and quickly knelt beside me. "Rroyd-san," she said. "I got to be this way. I Japanese." I think she expected me to be hurt, but I unrolled the print and as soon as she saw the bold characters in the upper corner she cried, "Hana-ogil Rroyd-san, you buy?" When we had studied the picture for a moment she went to Katsumi's trunk and returned with a drawing brush and an ink stone. Using the firm Chinese characters long ago adopted for Japanese writing, she added a fresh column of print at the picture's side: "Hana-ogi of Taka-

organizing human life, and I became truly engrossed in the tragedy of these dolls.

We were watching one of the many classical plays in which two lovers commit suicide. In this one a married man fell in love with a beautiful Yoshiwara girl, whom Hana-ogi identified for me in the dark as "just like old time Hana-ogi." I don't imagine any American has ever really understood the ins and outs of a Japanese tragedy, but I did get the impression of two people caught in an increasingly unbearable set of pressures. Just what these pressures were I never grasped but Hana-ogi and Katsumi wept softly and when I asked what about they said "It's so sad. People talking about this man."

But what I did understand was the musicians. For the mysterious men in black never spoke. The dialogue was sung by an amazing man accompanied by four musicians playing samisens. Maybe *sung* isn't the right word, for I have never heard more eerie sounds. The singer was a fat, bald-headed man in his late sixties who sat on his haunches, and as tragedy on the puppet stage deepened he would lean forward and scream in unbelievable fury until his round face became purple and the veins stood out in his neck. During love passages he would narrate the scene in a quivering feminine wail and as the remorseless pressure of society bore down on the lovers he would make his voice rough and horrible like a broken saw against a rusted nail. To hear this man was a terrifying experience for I had not known the human voice to be capable of such overpowering emotion. I would defy anyone not to be unnerved by that stupefying voice.

Now, as the hounded lovers approached the historic scene at Amijima where they would commit suicide together, the mysterious black figures on the stage whirled about in what seemed like a confusion of fates, the wooden dolls marched stiffly to their doom and the inspired story-teller shrieked in positive terror while the muted samisens played doleful music. There was another sound in this remarkable tragedy, but this I wasn't aware of until the curtain had closed: all the women near me

were weeping and as I looked away from the epileptic singer, his face at last relaxed as if he had gone suddenly dead, I saw lovely Hana-ogi sitting with her hands folded in her kimono, sobbing desperately. She was so bereft that tears might have come to my eyes, too, but when I turned her face toward mine I saw that she was in no way unhappy. A look of ecstasy had captured her wonderful face and her eyes glowed. I was astonished and whispered, "What's the matter, Hanayo-chan?"

"It was so beautiful," she said.

"What? The singing?"

"No," she replied softly, taking my hand. "The double suicide. It was so tender."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

The women around me were rising now and on each face I saw this same look of ecstatic satisfaction. Apparently the double suicide had inspired them even more than it had Hana-ogi. I was not surprised, therefore, when she made no attempt to explain this mystery, but when I looked at Katsumi and saw on her tear-stained face the same look of rapture I had to acknowledge that for the Japanese audience this double suicide had provided a vitally satisfying experience.

"What's it all about?" I asked Katsumi, indicating the weeping women.

"The lovers," she said quietly, pointing to the now barren stage. "At last they found happiness."

"They're dead," Joe said.

As we walked through the broad, clean streets of Osaka back to our canal I became hurtlingly aware that there would always be many parts of Japan that Joe Kelly and I could never penetrate. "What happened back there?" I asked Joe. "All I saw was a bunch of dolls and a man shouting."

The little guy laughed as if he hadn't anything to worry about and said, "Every time you see Katsumi-chan breaks down into sobbing for Toyô's suffering heart has broken. Used to stare me like that. Then I found out what was cooking. She was in love with him."

shot himself because he was charged with stealin' government money. Katsumi said it was so beautiful she had to cry. Next time it was a geisha from Kyoto. Cut her throat. That was especially lovely."

Hana-ogi heard me laugh and turned sharply. I expected her to upbraid me but instead she took my hand and sniffled. "You not understand," she said. "To have courage. To have honor. Is very beautiful."

As we entered the pathway leading to our canal, conversation was broken by a substantial commotion. We heard voices crying and hurried to our own alley in time to see the launching of a magnificent display of fireworks. "Ah!" Hana-ogi whispered. "I forget. Tanabata!" And long after the fireworks had ceased the people of our alley stood staring up at the stars. In Japanese Hana-ogi explained: "Vega, the princess star, fell in love with Altair, the herdboy star. Unlike American fairy stories, the herdboy married the princess without any trouble; then like our stories, he loved his wife so much that he allowed his sheep to stray so that the king threw him onto the other side of the Milky Way river. Once each year in July he swims the river and makes love with his princess. For the people of Japan this Tanabata is the night of love."

But Hana-ogi and I as we spread our bed roll reasoned that we had two more nights to spend together, so we left the love-making to the princess and her shepherd while we lay side by side listening to the exquisite sounds of the Japanese night. The old blind man who massaged sore muscles and burned moxa powder on nerves to make them well passed along our alley, sounding his melancholy flute and tapping with his gnarled cane. For a while there was silence. Then we could hear Watanabe-san coming home from his pachinko game with his wife snapping at his heels. Hana-ogi snuggled close to me and said, "All time we never fight," but I touched the trivial scar beneath her sideburns and asked, "What about the time I wanted you to become American?" Then she grew somber and said, "Because I know you, now I

better Japanese. You better American." Then I almost broke down. I wanted to lose myself in her love and confess, "I can't live without you, Hanayo-chan. God, I cannot face the lonely world without your tenderness." But I knew that we had two more nights to spend together and I was afraid that if I allowed myself full sorrow now the next nights might be unbearable. I choked once and buried my face against hers, feeling her Japanese eyes against my lips, her black Japanese hair against my face. "Oh, darling," I whispered, "why can't you marry me?" She clasped her arms about me as she had done that first night in the woods by the Shinto shrine and said, "Some people never love anyone." (She said it: "Rots peopre nebber rub nobody.") "Oh, Rroyd-san, I love you till my feet are old for dancing—till my teeth break off same like Hana-ogi's."

I thought I could not bear this but then came the sweetest night sound I have ever heard, the soft passage of the noodle vendor, pushing his belled cart while he played a rhythmic melody upon his flute. All through the night the noodle men passed through the streets of Osaka sounding their lovely melody. Some used five running notes ending in a faint call. Others played a minor tune. Some played random notes and a few, whom you came to remember and cherish, played songs that might have been termed love songs, for they seemed always to come by when you were sleeping with the girl who shared your bed roll on the tatami.

For the rest of this night, as I recall, Hana-ogi didn't even place her arm across my body and although it seems ridiculous this is what we said. I asked, "Don't you think we ought to take Joe and Katsumi to dinner tomorrow?"

She replied, "No, I think we should."

"Damn it, Hanayo, will you explain once more why you say, 'No, we should,' and 'Yes, we shouldn't.'"

Patiently she went over it again. "In Japanese polit to say that way. If you speak no to me, I say no to agre

"Ask me a question."

"Don't you want to marry me?"

"Yes, I not marry you."

"But what I asked was, 'Don't you want to?'"

The game stopped for she whispered, "No, no, Rroyd-san. I do want to."

I grumbled, "I can't understand either your grammar or your heart."

She placed my hand upon her heart and the delicate golden warmth of her slim body swept over me and she said, "My heart for you takusan, takusan. Remember when you say me that?"

I remembered, and as the sweet song of the noodle vendor echoed down our alley we fell asleep.

OSAKA GIRL TO MARINE ON LEAVE
FROM KOREA: For Japanese dancing
Hana-ogi now ichi-ban.

If Monday was peaceful, Tuesday was not. Hana-ogi and I woke about eight-thirty to find that Joe had left for one last appeal to Lt.Col. Craford. Katsumi, sensing that we would want to be alone, went out to lament with friends, so I started a fire and Hana-ogi, wrapped in a sheet, tried to get breakfast, but I kept pulling the sheet away until she finally surrendered it altogether, whereupon we propped a chair against the sliding doors and let the fire go out.

At eleven Hana-ogi dressed for Takarazuka. I tied her obi for her and she insisted that I leave the ends dangling almost to the floor. Taking a few mincing steps she cried, "I maiko girl!" Then deftly she swept the ends together in a bow, symbol of older girls, and said, "I virgin no more. I married woman." So far as I can remember those were the last words she said that morning. I watched her go down the alley and all the women in the open-front stores and houses called out to her on that summer morning.

She was gone only a few minutes when Joe came back. He was licked. He threw his cap on the floor and asked in final despair, "Ace, what can I do?"

"Take a deep breath," I said. "Stick it out. They'll have to change the law."

"In Washington they got fifty senators like Craford. You think they're gonna change the law?" He looked wild-eyed.

"Joel Ease up."

"How can I? Ace, I'm a no-good punk. If I go home without Katsumi it's pool halls and hamburger joints. I couldn't take it."

"For a while you have to."

borrow Mike Bailey's car, but as I left the air base for the theater, where I was to see the last performance of *Swing Butterfly*, I had a disgusting experience which even at the time seemed to me a premonition of tragedy. Outside the main gate of the air base at Itami a broad road stretched for more than half a mile. It was filled with cheap dance halls, beer joints, razzle-dazzle dives and plain whore houses. In front of each establishment lounged gangs of young girls and the stretch was known as "The 1,000 Yard Dash." It was claimed that any American in uniform who could negotiate this honky-tonk strip and keep his pants on would receive a prize of \$1,000 for heroism beyond the call of duty.

As I drove out of the air base for the last time I saw the frowsy halls: "Villago Bar," "Club Little Man," "The Flying Bull," and "Air Force Heaven." Then, to my disgust, my car stalled and three girls promptly surrounded it. One climbed in and said, "O.K. General. Where we off to?" Immediately an M.P. appeared and hauled the girl back onto the strip and gave me some brotherly warning, "Watch out for her, Major. She's no good." He saluted and pointed to a saloon up the stretch. "If you want something real nice, Major, you can trust me at the 'Silver Dollar.'"

When I got my car started I saw with dismay from the other direction had come a Packard from Yama Heights, the nearby residential district where the big brass lived, and in it were two colonels who knew me. They watched with disgust as the persistent little street girls started to climb back in my car as soon as the M.P. had left. As I clucked to myself I thought that some day in the future I would see Hana-ogi and I would have to speak her name to a Japanese and if he had been at Itami he would remember "The 1,000 Yard Dash" and the brassy prostitutes and he would wink at me and say, "Boy, do I know those Japs." But he wouldn't know, and nothing I could say to anyone who had seen Itami would explain. He sat at the wheel of my car and mumbled,

He sat down cross-legged on the tatami and said grimly, "In Chicago I killed a man. A mixed-up affair—not all my fault. They couldn't pin anything on me. I'm not apologizin', because it could just as well have been my fault. Because I was no damn good. And if I lose Katsumi I'll be no damn good again."

I knew there was something I ought to say, some standard word of courage, but I couldn't think of any. Joe said, "A guy like you, from a good home—you wouldn't understand. For the first time in my life I'm livin'. At night when I hear Katsumi come up the alley shufflin' her wooden shoes—later when she puts that crazy hard, little pillow next to mine—when I see the plain goddamn goodness in that girl..." He looked down at the tatami and I guessed that he had tears in his throat. I wanted to say that I knew but I was tied up.

"Joe, promise me you won't get into trouble with Col. Craford."

He looked up at me as if Craford were already dead. "Him?" he sniffed. "The only time I believe in God is when I think of that fat slob. God must be keepin' score on bastards like that. Otherwise nothin' makes sense."

I said, "Remember, Joe. You promised you'd make no trouble with that..." I searched for a name and suddenly the total misery of Joe's problem rose in my mouth like bile. I grew purple and cursed Craford for several minutes. I cursed my father and General Webster and Mrs. Webster and every convention that made it impossible for Hana-ogi and me to marry. Then I stopped, but I was still quivering with accumulated fury.

Joe looked up at me and said, "Thanks, Major. I thought you felt that way."

I was still shaking. I said, "Even so I believe things'll work out."

He said, "I don't."

There was nothing to add. He knew how I felt. He knew I was with him. Maybe I had steered him away from some hot-brained mistake. That's the best I could hope, so I went over to Itami to clear out my desk and

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should have happened fifty years from now. Then maybe there would have been a chance. In my day there was no chance for such a marriage." I saw myself in years to come. Junior officers would boast, "You can say that General Gruver looks tough and formal but did you know that when he served in Japan he ran off with a geisha girl? Yep, took her right out of a house." But they would never know.

However, the distaste of this experience along the strip was expelled by Hana-ogi's exquisite performance. When I had first seen her I had been insulted by her burlesque of Americans and I had been unable to appreciate her ability. Now my reaction was different, for I discovered that even against my will I had to laugh at her lampoon of Americans. The reason was simple. She had studied with intimate care my mannerisms and now reproduced them in burlesque form. When she lit a cigarette she mimicked me, when she propositioned Madame Butterfly it was me trying to kiss her on the Bitchi-bashi. This time I, more than anyone else in the audience, enjoyed her burlesque of Americans.

As her big dance number approached I became apprehensive, for I suspected that her aping of Americanisms would dull her Japanese touch, but I was wrong, for in her samurai there was now a freedom and swagger that no maiko girl, as Hana-ogi termed the virgin dancers, could have created. Hana-ogi was the artist. Even more than mistress or wife, she was an artist, and if her American jitterbugging was more hilarious for having studied an American at close hand, her Japanese classical dance was stronger for having known that American not as a subject for study but as a lover—as one who cried eagerly to marry her. I understood what she had said the night before. She was now a better Japanese.

When intermission came I wanted to rush backstage and embrace her and tell her that no matter if she lived a million years cooped up at Takarazuka, I would be with her every time she danced—but I was not to see her, for I could not get into the dressing-rooms.

Insubordination and desertion would be the charge and he might never get Katsumi into the States, so I asked, "Jesus, are you sure he deserted?"

"I checked him in. Sharkey saw him leave."

We stopped at the canal and I led the way to the alley, where two M.P.'s tried the door. It seemed to be barred, so they were going to break the freshly mended paper, but at that moment it seemed like my house and I didn't want the paper broken, so I said, "Maybe a chair's against it. I'll use the window."

One M.P. came with me to the back of the house while I forced open a window and started to crawl in. While my leg was still suspended I saw Joe. He was on the floor with his head blown apart by a .45. Across him, obviously having died later, lay Katsumi with a kitchen knife plunged completely through her neck.

For a moment I didn't call out or anything. All I could do was look at the floor—at the two lovers who had needed each other so much. The M.P. came up and looked over my shoulder. Then he called loudly, "You better break the door down, Sharkey."

I watched the frail doors bend and break. I heard the clatter of wood and the tearing of paper and the doors through which Hana-ogi had so often come at dusk, dropping her silken packages on the floor, were gone. Sharkey took one look and said, "Get the camera. You wanna catch this just as it happened."

Sharkey barked to the man at my shoulder, "Eddie, you inform the Jap police." Then he saw me and said, "We'll need you here, Major."

I got down out of the window and walked around to the front of the house where a crowd had gathered and where children were screaming the tragedy across the canal to other children. An old man pried his way in through the broken doors and came out to report accurately upon the double suicide.

I was numb with helpless anger. Of all the people in the world, Joe and Katsumi Kelly should have been protected and kept alive. I thought of them laughing and

helping each other and I got all sick inside, but then thought of Hana-ogi, who would be coming home soon and I grew panicky for her because the photographers had arrived and were taking pictures like mad.

And then I saw, on the outskirts of the crowd, two of the little prostitutes Hana-ogi and I had met the other night. They were already working the main streets and had stopped by to witness the tragedy. I said to them "You remember Hana-ogi?"

"Sure, Major."

"You watch up there. Tell her to go back. Please."

"Sure, Major. You got cigarettos?"

The other girl pointed to the house and jabbed herself in the stomach as if with a knife. "They kill?"

I nodded and they stared at the house with grim fascination. "Japanese girl and G.I.?"

I said yes and the little girls moved toward the head of the canal where they could intercept Hana-ogi while the reporters swarmed at me. They were bright young men, most of whom spoke English, and I had enough sense to keep my mouth shut, for if I had said anything at all I would have blurted out, "They wanted to ship him back to America but he insisted upon staying in Japan." Finally I composed myself and said, "He was with my outfit in Korea. This is a complete shock."

The reporters saw somebody else and swarmed away but one stayed and asked, "Aren't you Ace Gruver?"

I nodded.

"You the one living with Hana-ogi?"

I wanted to shoot him dead but everything had collapsed now, so I nodded grimly and he pointed up the canal.

There at last she was, Hana-ogi. Late afternoon sun played upon her tousled black hair and illuminated the fall of her kimono. With eager pin-toed steps she hurried along the canal, coming so close that I could see the slant of her adorable eyes and that sweet mouth always ready with a teasing smile.

The two prostitutes stopped her, informed her of the

suicides and tried to prevent her from joining the crowd. She ignored them and started coming toward me down the canal bank but the newspaperman who was standing with me broke away, ran toward her and spoke rapidly. She peered across the crowd searching for me, and when she failed to find me she broke away from the guardian prostitutes and the warning newspaperman to fight her way resolutely toward the very spot where the police waited.

In that moment I could see the reckless collapse of her world and instinctively a shout rose to my lips. I called in panic, "Lo, the postillion!"

She stopped. The smile that had crept upon the edge of her lips vanished and her lovely face once more became an impersonal mask. Standing on tiptoe, she peered across the crowd, still seeking me, but I hid myself so that she would have to go back. After a moment she turned away from the crowds that shoved toward the suicide house and I last saw her moving with extraordinary grace back to the main street. The summer breeze, drifting down the canal, tugged at her kimono and twilight rested on her hair. I can still see the folds of cloth meticulous about her neck. Then she moved behind a pillar and I never saw her again.

For just as I started to run after her, Lt.Col. Craford waddled up and he seemed almost to relish the tragedy. It proved he was right and that guys like Kelly were no damned good. He saw me and lurched over to repeat his warning that he was shipping me . . .

"You bastard!" I cried. "You stinking bastard!"

He jumped back as if I had kicked him and began to bluster but I couldn't take any more. "You swine! Kelly told me what you said to him, you bastard! You killed this kid!"

He was astonished at my outbursts and suddenly became aware that if I was really outraged I might carry the fight to my father, so he tried to pacify me, but I said, "Don't be afraid of me, you dirty bastard. I'm not going to squeal on you—but you murdered this kid."

James A. Michener

He withdrew and a Japanese police official said, "come with me," and for three hours while I ached to see Hana-ogi I had to answer questions and fill reports as to the death of Katsumi-san. It was after eleven o'clock when I was released and I caught a cab. The driver gasped when I said Takarazuka, but he drove me there and at eleven that Sunday night I hurried past the cryptomerias and into the dormitory where Hana-ogi lived.

Apparently I was expected, for old Teruko-san and her grim-faced interpreter were waiting for me. "Hana-ogi-san is not here," they said firmly.

"I know she's here!" I cried.

"Hana-ogi-san is on her way to Tokyo."

"She can't be! I saw her!"

"Please, Major Gruver. Hana-ogi-san is not here."

Unthinkingly, I forced my way past the two women and along the corridor on which Hana-ogi lived. The Takarazuka girls peered at me as I stormed past, and I sighed when I reached Hana-ogi's empty room. It was empty. The little things that made it hers were gone.

From the next room Fumiko-san appeared and wept, "Hana-ogi-san really go, Major."

I turned around like a madman. It couldn't end like this way—across a canal, over the heads of a hundred people, at the scene of a suicide and Hana-ogi departs for Tokyo. "She's here!" I insisted.

I stood helpless and then saw in one corner of the room a zori that she had forgotten. I stepped across the tatami on tip-toe as if she were still there, reproving myself for not having removed my shoes, and I lifted the zori and it seemed as if her powerful, inspired foot were still in my hand, with the big toe clinging to the zori. The Japanese music beginning and the samurai about to start and Hana-ogi . . . oh, Hana-ogi . . .

"Hanayo-chan!" I shouted. "Hanayo-chan! Where is she? Takarazuka!"

makes you a better man makes you
a better husband."

General Webster called me in to Kobe next day and said, "That was a dreadful affair last night in Osaka." He asked me if I had heard any rumors that Lt.Col Craford had handled the affair badly. I wanted to put a blast on the fat blubber-gut who had murdered Kelly, but something old and powerful inside me argued, "Why start a military mess?" and I kept my mouth shut. Then I shrugged my shoulders and said, "I guess Craford handled it O.K."

But immediately I knew that I was reverting to the man I had been when I first argued with Kelly against marrying a Japanese girl. I was defending the Army against the man and I felt ashamed of myself. I must have shivered, for General Webster said gruffly, "Lloyd don't take this so bitterly. Kelly's dead. Nobody can do anything about it. You told me yourself he was a dead end punk—beyond saving."

I looked at the general. A man under his command had committed suicide rather than return to the United States and he was shrugging it off. I asked, "What about that colonel in Tokyo who shot himself rather than leave his Japanese girl? Or the major in Yokohama? Were they punks?"

"Yes! They were second-class men. I've seen reports of seven such suicides and they were all shoddy material. First-class men sometimes fall in love with native girls of course they do. But they get over it. They forget the girls and they go home. They go back to work."

"Damn it!" I shouted. "Why do men like you and my father call them native girls? Can't you believe . . ."

General Webster was remarkably patient. He stopped me by thrusting a yellow paper into my hand. "I suppose a young man's no good if he doesn't have the g

to fight for what he thinks is right," he said. "You've had the courage to fight for Joe Kelly and his native girl. It was gallant, Lloyd, but it wasn't necessary. Read it."

The yellow paper was from Washington and it said a law was being passed to permit men like Joe Kelly to bring their Japanese wives into the States. "Now they do it!" I cried.

"They were doing it all along," Webster said. "Everyone knew the old law was bad."

I thought of Joe and Katsumi lying in blood and I felt sick. I had to see Hana-ogi. In all the world she was the only person who could help me now. My heart and my mind cried out for her. "Sir," I blurted, "I've got to get to Tokyo."

"It's forbidden, Lloyd. You're flying home."

"I don't care what happens. I've got to see Hana-ogi."

The general winced as I used the strange name, then said calmly, "If you disobey another order . . ."

"All right, I'll leave the Air Force. I'll get a . . ."

I expected General Webster to hit the roof, but when he's away from his wife he isn't so bad. He said, "Sit down, Lloyd. I'm not going to throw my weight at you. You're being a stupid idiot and we both know it, but you come by it naturally."

"What do you mean?"

"This seems like 1924."

"I don't understand," I said dully.

"Your father was mixed up with a girl—the one I told you about. There was one member of our class you've never met. Chap named Charley Scales. He had a chance in '24 to drop out of service and take a good job with General Motors. So your father decided to marry the girl and chuck the Army and go along with Charley, but some of us saner fellows talked him out of it. Must run in your family."

"My father was going to leave the Army?"

"Yep. He was all broken up." General Webster laughed and scratched his chin. "I remember that we were quite

sorry for him. We thought he was pretty weak to be broken up like that over a waitress. Look at him now."

I said, "I think he made a mistake in 1924."

General Webster breathed a sigh of relief and said, "So do I, but I guess any man has a right to get mixed up with a waitress once . . ."

"I don't mean that. I mean he probably should have married the waitress."

"Lloyd! Your father a Chevrolet salesman!"

"I mean he should never have married my mother. They've never been happy."

"Happy? What's happy? He's a great general."

"I think he's made a mess of his life."

General Webster got mad. "You think! Who in hell are you to think? Only a few men in any generation can be great generals. Don't you forget it!"

I said, "I still want to marry this girl."

"Son," General Webster said, "the Supervisor of Takazuka and I stayed up late last night figuring how to keep his outfit and mine free of bad publicity over the suicides. We protected ourselves and we can't let you do things."

"At least give me a chance to say good-bye to her."

"No, she herself wanted it this way."

"She didn't!"

"I saw her. She said to send you back to America."

I said, "I don't believe that." So he handed me a letter which had been written two days before. I knew because Iana-ogi had written it on my stationery and as I read I could hear her gentle voice groping its way through my language:

Darling,

Pretty soon (That was a phrase I used a lot . . .) our last night. I Tokyo go. You America go. (A sentence was scratched out, then . . .) I not think for do not go out. I think you many times. (Then a message from her phrase book . . .)

and the letter was signed with the Chinese characters representing her name. How strange they were, those characters, how beautiful, how deeply hidden from me behind the wall of Asia!

I wanted to fling myself upon the floor and weep as Hana-ogi might have wept had we been at home, but instead there came to me that sad and final Japanese word which she had refused to teach me: "Sayonara, Hana-ogi. Sayonara, you beautiful dancer. You've chosen the tough way. I hope your gods give you the courage to follow it. Sayonara, Katsumi, little mother. Forgive me that I once thought you too ugly to kiss. You can't know it now but I fought my way through four M.P.'s to kiss you good-bye and fat Col. Craford shuddered. Oh, Katsumi, sayonara. And Goddamn it, Sukoshi Joe, you died too soon. They're passing a law right now to let guys like you bring your wives home. It was a good fight that night until I fainted. Sayonara, Sukoshi Joe. You did it too soon. To the alley and the canal and the little houses and the pachinko parlor and to the flutes at night—sayonara. And you, Japan, you crowded islands, you tragic land—sayonara, you enemy, you friend."

But even as I said these words I knew that I had to put them out of mind, for I was forced to acknowledge that I lived in an age when the only honorable profession was soldiering, when the only acceptable attitude toward strange lands and people of another color must be not love but fear.

Like the voice of my own conscience I heard, as from a great distance, General Webster saying, "Pull yourself together, son. Whatever makes you a better man makes you a better officer."

I looked up and said, "What?"

"I oughtn't to tell you this, Lloyd, because it isn't official yet. But as soon as you get back to Randolph Field they're making you a lieutenant-colonel."

Instinctively I saluted.

The general said, "We'd better move along. Eileen wants to drive us to the airport."

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The car followed him at a walking pace, with a subdued humming sound caressing to the ear. After about twenty yards it passed him and stopped a short distance ahead; then the door opened again. He walked on without turning and again heard that melting voice imploring him: "Marcello, jump in . . . please do . . . forget what I said yesterday . . . Marcello, d'you hear me?" Marcello could not help saying to himself that the voice was rather repugnant—why should he moan in that way? It was lucky there was no one going along the street or he would have been ashamed. Nevertheless, he did not want to discourage the man altogether, and as he went on past the car he half turned and looked back, as though inviting him to persevere. He found himself throwing him a glance almost of encouragement, and was suddenly and unmistakably aware of the same feeling of not unpleasant humiliation, of playing a part not entirely unnatural to him, that he had felt for a moment when the boys had fastened the petticoat round his waist. It was as though fundamentally he did not dislike acting the part of the coy, disdainful woman—was, in fact, led on by nature to do so.

Meanwhile the car had started again behind him. Marcello wondered whether the moment had come to yield, and decided, on reflection, that it had not yet arrived. The car passed close to him, not stopping but merely slowing down. He heard the man's voice calling to him, "Marcello . . ." and immediately afterward, the sudden hum of the engine as the car moved forward. He was afraid that Lino had lost patience and was going away; he was assailed by a great fear of having to show himself at school next day empty-handed; and he started running, crying out, "Lino . . . Lino . . . stop, Lino." But the wind carried his words away, scattering them in the air with the dead leaves in a cheerless, noisy squall; the car was growing smaller and smaller in the distance—evidently Lino had not heard and was going away—and he would not get the revolver, and Turchi would start tormenting him again. Then he sighed with relief and walked on at a more or less normal pace. The car had gone on ahead not to avoid him but to wait for him at a crossing; and it

had now stopped, blocking the whole width of the pavement.

He felt a kind of annoyance at Lino for having given him this humiliating moment of suspense, and he made an inward decision, in a sudden access of cruelty, to make him pay for it by carefully calculated harshness. Meanwhile, without hurrying, he had reached the crossing. The car was standing there, long, black, all its old brass fittings and antiquated coachwork glistening. Marcello started off as though he were going to walk round it: immediately the door opened and Lino looked out.

"Marcello," he said in a decided but despairing voice. "Forget what I said to you on Saturday . . . You've done your duty now . . . Come on, get in, Marcello."

Marcello had stopped beside the hood of the car. He turned and came back a step and said coldly, without looking at the man, "No, I'm not coming . . . but not because you told me on Saturday not to come . . . just because I don't want to."

"Why don't you want to?"

"Why should I? . . . Why should I get into the car?"

"To please me . . ."

"But I don't want to please you."

"Why? You don't like me?"

"No," said Marcello, lowering his eyes and playing with the handle of the door. He was aware that he had put on a vexed, obstinate, hostile expression, and no longer knew whether he did this as part of the game or in earnest. It was certainly a game that he was playing with Lino, but if it was only a game, why did he have such strong and complicated feelings about it—a mixture of vanity and repugnance, of humiliation and cruelty and contempt? He heard Lino laugh softly and affectionately and ask him, "Why don't you like me?"

This time he raised his eyes and looked him in the face. It was true, Lino was unattractive, he thought; but he had never asked himself why. He looked at his face, almost ascetic in its thin severity, and then he understood why he was not attracted to Lino: it was a double face, a face in which dishonesty had found, positively, a physical expression. It seemed to him as he looked at it . . . could

detect this dishonesty especially in the mouth—a mouth that at first sight was subtle, thin, contemptuous, chaste, but which, when the lips were parted and turned back in a smile, showed an expanse of glowing mucous membrane that glistened with the water of appetite. He hesitated, looking at Lino who was waiting for his answer with a smile, and then said with sincerity, "I don't like you because you've got a wet mouth."

Lino's smile vanished and his face darkened. "What nonsense are you inventing now?" he said. And then, quickly recovering himself, he added with easy facetiousness: "Well then, does Mister Marcello wish to get into his motorcar?"

"I'll get in," said Marcello, making up his mind at last, "only on one condition."

"And what's that?"

"That you'll really give me the revolver."

"Yes, that's understood . . . Now come on, get in."

"No, you've got to give it to me now, at once," Marcello obstinately insisted.

"But I haven't got it here, Marcello," said the man with sincerity, "it was left in my room on Saturday . . . We'll go to the house now and fetch it."

"Then I'm not coming," Marcello decided in a way that he himself had not expected. "Good-bye."

He moved a step forward as if to go away; and this time Lino lost patience. "Come along, don't behave like a child," he exclaimed. Leaning out, he took hold of Marcello by the arm and pulled him into the seat beside him. "Now we'll go straight to the house," he added, "and I promise you, you shall have the revolver." Marcello, secretly delighted to have been compelled to get into the car, made no protest; all he did was to pout childishly. Lino closed the door with alacrity and started the engine; the car moved off.

For a long time they did not speak. Lino did not appear talkative—perhaps, thought Marcello, because he was too pleased to talk; and as for Marcello, he had nothing to say. Now Lino would give him the revolver and then he would go home and next day he would take the revolver to school with him and show it to Turchi. Beyond these

simple and pleasing anticipations his mind did not travel. His only fear was that Lino might try in some way to defraud him. In that case, he thought, he would invent some other trick to drive Lino to desperation and force him to keep his promise.

Sitting still, with his package of books on his knee, watched the great plane trees and the buildings slipping past, until they reached the far end of the avenue. As the car started up the hill, Lino, as though he had been thinking about it for a long time, asked, "Who taught you to be so coquettish, Marcello?"

Marcello, not quite certain of the meaning of the word, hesitated before answering. Lino seemed to become aware of his innocent ignorance, and added, "I mean so clever."

"Why?" asked Marcello.

"Well, never mind."

"It's you who are the clever one," said Marcello; "you promise me the revolver and never give it to me."

Lino laughed and put out his hand and patted Marcello's bare knee. "Yes," he said, "today I'm the clever one." Marcello, embarrassed, moved his knee; but Lino, still keeping his hand on it, added in an exultant tone, "You know, Marcello, I'm so pleased you came today. When I think that the other day I was begging you not to take any notice of me and not to come, I realize what a fool one can be sometimes . . . yes, an absolute fool. But luckily you had more sense than I did, Marcello."

Marcello said nothing. He did not altogether understand what Lino was saying to him, and besides, the hand resting on his knee irritated him. He tried more than once to move his knee away but the hand still remained. Fortunately, at a bend in the road, there was a car coming in the opposite direction. Marcello pretended to be frightened, and exclaimed, "Look out, that car's coming straight at us!"—and this time Lino withdrew his hand to turn the steering-wheel. Marcello breathed again.

They reached the country road with its high walls and hedges, then the archway with its green-painted iron gates, and finally the drive, with its rows of cypresses on each side and the light glass of the veranda at the far end. M

hat the wind was tormenting the cypresses just as it had he last time, under a dark and stormy sky. The car topped, Lino jumped out and gave a hand to Marcello, and then they went off together toward the door. To-day Lino did not go on ahead but held him tightly by the arm, as though he feared he would try to escape. Marcello wanted to tell him to slacken his grip, but there was no time. Lino seemed almost to be holding him suspended in the air, as if they were flying; and in this way he hurried him through the hall and pushed him into the passage. There, quite unexpectedly, he seized him roughly by the neck, saying, "How stupid you are . . . how stupid . . . why didn't you want to come?"

His voice was no longer jovial, but hoarse and broken, though with a mechanical sort of tenderness in it. Marcello, surprised, was on the point of raising his eyes to look into Lino's face, but at that moment he received a violent shove from behind. Just as one might thrust away a cat or a dog after seizing it by the back of the neck, so Lino had hurled him into his room. Then Marcello saw him turn the key in the lock, put it in his pocket and turn toward him with an expression of mingled joy and raging triumph. Lino cried in a loud voice, "That's enough now . . . now you've got to do what *I* want . . . that's enough, Marcello, you tyrant, you little beast, that's enough . . . come along, do as you're told and not another word."

These commanding, contemptuous, arrogant expressions were uttered with savage delight, with an almost sensual enjoyment; and Marcello, bewildered as he was, could not but notice that they were words without sense, more like fragments of some triumphal chant than expressions of conscious thought and will. Frightened and astonished, he watched Lino as he strode up and down the room, pulling his cap from his head and flinging it on the window sill, snatching a shirt that was hanging over a chair, rolling it up in a ball and then shutting it up in a drawer, smoothing the crumpled bedspread, performing all sorts of practical acts with a frenzy full of obscure significance. Then, still shouting out incoherent phrases of an insolent, peremptory nature, he went

over to the wall at the head of the bed, tore down the crucifix and threw it with pretentious brutality into the cupboard drawer; and Marcello realized that by this gesture Lino intended in some way or other to make it clear that he had swept aside his last scruples. As though to confirm Marcello's fear of this, Lino took the coveted revolver from the drawer of the bedside table and showed it to him, shouting, "You see it? . . . Well, you're not going to have it—never . . . You've got to do what I want without any presents, without any revolvers . . . either for love or by force."

So it was true, thought Marcello; Lino intended to cheat him, just as he had feared. He felt himself turn white in the face with anger; and he said, "Give me the revolver or I'll go away."

"No, no, there isn't a chance of it . . . either for love or by force." Lino was now brandishing the revolver in one hand; and with the other he seized Marcello by the arm and hurled him on to the bed. Marcello fell in a sitting position, but with such violence that he banged his head against the wall. At once, Lino, passing suddenly from violence to gentleness and from command to entreaty, knelt down in front of him. He put one arm round his legs and laid his other hand, still grasping the weapon, on the bedspread. He groaned and called upon Marcello by name; then, still groaning, flung both arms round his knees. The revolver now lay loose on the bed, black against the white coverlet. Marcello looked at Lino as he knelt there, his suppliant, tear-stained face, burning with desire, now raised toward him and now lowered again and rubbed, like the muzzle of some devoted dog, against his legs. Then he grasped the revolver and, with a violent thrust, rose to his feet. Immediately Lino, thinking possibly that the boy meant to return his embrace, opened his arms and let him go. Marcello took a step into the middle of the room and then turned round.

Later, thinking over what had happened, Marcello could not help recalling that the mere touch of the cold butt of the weapon had aroused in his mind a

of the most ruthless and bloodthirsty kind; but at that moment all he was aware of was a violent pain in his head where he had knocked it against the wall, and an acute sense of irritation and repugnance toward Lino. The latter had remained on his knees beside the bed; but when he saw Marcello take a step backward and point the revolver at him, he turned slightly but without getting up, and throwing out his arms with a theatrical gesture, he cried dramatically, "Shoot, Marcello . . . kill me . . . yes, kill me like a dog."

It seemed to Marcello that he had never hated him so much as at that moment, for that repulsive mixture of sensuality and austerity, of repentance and lust; and in a manner that was both terrified and deliberate—just as though he felt he had to comply with the man's request—he pressed the trigger.

The shot resounded with sudden violence in the little room; and he saw Lino fall and then raise himself again with his back towards him, clutching at the side of the bed with both hands. He pulled himself up very slowly, fell sideways onto the bed and lay still. Marcello went over to him, put down the revolver at the head of the bed, called in a low voice, "Lino," and, without waiting for an answer, went to the door. But it was locked, and he remembered that Lino had taken the key out and put it in his pocket. He hesitated, disliking intensely the idea of fumbling in the dead man's pockets; then, his eyes falling on the window, he remembered that the room was on the ground floor. Sitting astride the window sill, he turned his head hastily, casting a long, frightened, cautious look at the open space in front of the house and the car standing outside the door: he knew that if anyone happened to pass at that moment, they could not fail to see him sitting there in the window; yet there was nothing else to be done. But there was no one, and beyond the scattered trees round the house even the bare, hilly countryside appeared to be deserted as far as the eye could reach. He climbed down from the window, took his package of books from the seat of the car and walked off in a leisurely fashion toward the gate. As he

walked there was reflected in his consciousness, as in a mirror, the picture of himself, a boy in shorts with some books under his arm, walking down the cypress-bordered drive, an incomprehensible figure full of gloomy foreboding.

PART ONE

CHAPTER 4

HOLDING his hat in one hand, Marcello took his dark glasses off his nose with the other and put them away in his jacket pocket. He entered the hall of the library and asked the attendant where he could find the files of newspapers. Then, without hurrying, he went up the broad staircase where a big window on the landing at the top blazed with the strong light of May. He felt light and almost empty, with a sense of perfect physical well-being, of intact youthful vigor. The new gray, plain-cut suit he was wearing added to this feeling another that was no less pleasant, that of a serious, precise elegance that accorded with his own tastes.

On the first floor, after filling in a slip at the entrance, he made his way to the reading room, to a desk behind which were an elderly attendant and a girl. He waited his turn and then handed in his slip, requesting the complete 1920 issues of the chief local newspaper. He waited patiently, leaning against the desk and looking at the reading room in front of him. Rows of writing tables, each with a green-shaded lamp, stretched away to the far end of the room. Marcello looked carefully at these writing tables scantily populated for the most part by students, and mentally selected his own—the last one at the back of the room on the right. The girl reappeared, her two outstretched arms supporting the big bound volume of newspapers he had asked for. Marcello took it and went to the table he had chosen.

He put down the volume on the sloping top of the writing table and then sat down, taking care to hitch

at last decided to hunt out in the library the notice of what had occurred so many years before. His anxiety, which had never been entirely lulled during these years, had never considered the material consequences of his act. It was, on the contrary, in order to see what sort of feeling the confirmation of Lino's death would arouse in him that he had that morning crossed the library threshold. From this feeling he would judge whether he was still the boy he had once been, obsessed by his own fatal abnormality, or the new, completely normal man that he had since intended to be and that he was convinced he was.

He felt a singular relief and, perhaps more than relief, astonishment, when he realized that the printed news on the yellow paper of seventeen years before aroused no appreciable echo in his mind. His reaction, he felt, was like that of a man who, having had a bandage over a deep wound for a very long time, makes up his mind at last to take it off and discovers, to his surprise, that the skin where he expected to find at least a scar, is clear and smooth without a mark of any kind. Looking for the paragraph in the paper had been like removing the bandage; and to find himself unaffected by it was to find himself cured. How this cure had been accomplished, he could not have said. But there could be no doubt that it was not merely time that had produced this result. Much was owing to himself too, to his own conscious will, during all those years, to escape from abnormality and make himself like other men.

Nevertheless a kind of conscientious scruple made him take his eyes from the newspaper and gaze into space, with a feeling that he wished to visualize Lino's death clearly—a thing that until now he had always instinctively avoided doing. The paragraph in the paper was written in the conventional language of journalism, and this in itself might be a further inducement to indifference and apathy, but his own evocation of the occurrence could not fail to be vivid and moving and therefore well fitted to reawaken those ancient terrors in his mind, if they still existed. And so, following obediently in the wake of memory, which, like a pitiless, impartial guide con-

turned the pages of the old newspaper—like taking the bandages from a wound and finding it completely healed; and he said to himself that perhaps under the smooth skin the old poison was still lurking in the form of a closed, invisible abscess. He was confirmed in this suspicion not only by the transient quality of the relief he had felt when first he had discovered that Lino's death was a matter of indifference to him, but also by the faint, depressing sense of melancholy, hanging like a transparent mourning veil between him and reality. It was as if the memory of the Lino incident, even though dissolved by the potent acids of time, had yet cast an inexplicable shadow over all his thoughts and feelings.

As he walked slowly through the crowded, sun-filled streets he tried to establish a comparison between himself as he had been seventeen years before and as he was now. He remembered that at thirteen he had been a timid boy, rather feminine, impressionable, unmethodical, imaginative, impetuous, passionate. Now, at thirty, he was not in the least timid but perfectly sure of himself, entirely masculine in his tastes and in his general attitude, calm, methodical to a fault, almost completely lacking in imagination, cool and self-controlled. It seemed to him he could remember having had, at that time, a certain tumultuous, indefinable richness of character. Now his whole character was well-defined though perhaps a little barren, and the poverty and rigidity of a few ideas and convictions had taken the place of that former generous, confused fecundity. Lastly, he had been confiding, expansive, sometimes positively exuberant. Now he was reserved, always equable in temper, lacking in vivacity if not actually gloomy, silent. The most distinctive feature, however, of the radical change that had come about in those seventeen years was the disappearance of a kind of excess of vitality resulting from a ferment of unusual and perhaps even abnormal instincts; its place seemed to have been taken by a sort of benumbed, gray normality.

It had been merely chance, he went on to think, that had prevented his submitting to Lino's desires; and certainly his demeanor toward the chauffeur, full as it

was of coquettishness and of feminine tyranny, had been actuated not merely by childish venality but also by confused, unconscious inclination of the senses. But now he was really and truly a man just like any other man. He stopped in front of a mirror in a shop window and looked at himself for some time, examining himself with an objective detachment in which there was no complacency. Yes, he was a man just like any other man, with his gray suit, his sober tie, his tall, well-proportioned figure, his round, brown face, his well-brushed hair, his dark glasses. He remembered how, at the university, he had discovered with a kind of delight that there were at least a thousand young men of his age who dressed, spoke, thought and behaved like him. Now, probably, that number could be multiplied by a million. He was a normal man, he thought with a sharp, disdainful satisfaction, there could be no doubt about it, although he could not say how it had come about.

He remembered suddenly that he had finished his cigarettes and went into a tobacco shop in the Piazza Colonna arcade. He went up to the counter and asked for his favorite brand. At that same moment three other people were asking for the same kind and the tobacconist quickly put down on the marble-topped counter, in front of the four outstretched hands holding money, four identical packs which the four hands removed with the same identical gesture. Marcello observed that he too took his pack, felt it to see that it was soft enough, and then tore open the paper in the same way as the other three. He observed also that two of the three put the pack of cigarettes, just as he did, into a small inside pocket of their jackets. Lastly, one of the three, as soon as he got outside the shop, stopped to light a cigarette with a silver lighter exactly like Marcello's. These details gave him an almost voluptuous satisfaction. Yes, he was just like other people, just like everyone else. Just like those who were buying cigarettes of the same brand and with the same movements as he, and just like those who, when a woman in red walked past, turned—and he with them—to eye the quivering solid buttocks beneath the thin stuff of her dress. Except that sometimes, a

blance to other men was deliberate and imitative rather than a result of a conformity of inclinations.

A short, misshapen newsboy came toward him with a bundle of papers over his arm, waving one of them and shouting at the top of his voice, his face purple with the effort, some incomprehensible phrase in which the only recognizable words were "Victory" and "Spain." Marcello bought a paper and carefully read the heading stretched across the top of the page; in the war in Spain the supporters of Franco had won another victory. He was conscious of reading this piece of news with undeniable pleasure, and he felt this was another sign of his complete and absolute normality. He had watched the birth of the war from the first hypocritical heading: "What is Happening in Spain?"; and then the war had spread and become of immense importance, had turned into a contest not merely of arms but of ideas; and gradually he had noticed that he was participating in it with a curious feeling that was entirely detached from any political or moral consideration (although such considerations often came up in his mind), a feeling very like that of a sports enthusiast who takes the side of one football team against another.

From the very beginning he had wanted Franco to win—not with any feeling of bitterness but with a profound, tenacious desire, as though such a victory would provide confirmation of the goodness and rightness of his own tastes and ideas not merely in the political field but in all others as well. It was, perhaps, from a love of symmetry that he had desired, and still desired, Franco's victory—like someone furnishing his house who is anxious to collect in it furniture that is all of the same style. For he seemed to read this symmetry in the events of the last few years, with a steady increase in its clarity and importance: first the advent of fascism in Italy, then in Germany, then the war in Ethiopia, and then the war in Spain. This progress pleased him for some reason—possibly because it was easy to recognize in it a more than human logic, and the ability to recognize this gave one a sense of security and infallibility. Furthermore, he thought, folding the newspaper and put-

ing it in his pocket, it could not be said that he had become convinced of the rightness of Franco's cause for reasons of politics or propaganda. This conviction had come to him from nowhere, as it may be supposed to come to ignorant, ordinary people—out of the air; in fact, just as one says an idea is "in the air." He took Franco's side just like innumerable other perfectly ordinary people who knew little or nothing about Spain, who scarcely glanced at the headlines of the newspaper, who were not cultivated.

It was, in fact, out of sympathy—using that word in an entirely unthinking, nonlogical, irrational sense. A sympathy that could be said only metaphorically to come out of the air; for in the air there may be pollen, smoke from houses, dust, light, but not ideas. This sympathy therefore must come from deeper layers of consciousness, and it provided yet another proof that his normality was neither superficial nor botched up in a deliberately arbitrary fashion, with arguments and motives that were mere matters of opinion. It was closely bound up with an instinctive, almost physiological condition, with a faith which he shared with millions of other persons. Here was one single, complete thing he had in common with the society and the people among whom he found himself living. He was not a solitary, an abnormal person, a madman, he was one of them, a brother, a fellow-citizen, a comrade; and this, after his great fear that the killing of Lino might separate him from the rest of humanity, was in the highest degree comforting.

In any case, whether it was Franco or another, it mattered little, provided there was a bond, a bridge, a symbol of attachment and communion. But the fact that it was Franco and not another proved that his emotional participation in the Spanish war, besides being an indication of unity and companionship, was also a true and right thing. What else could truth be, if not something that was evident to all, that was believed and held incontestable by all? And so there was an unbroken chain with all its links firmly joined, from his feeling of sympathy, prior to all thought, to the consciousness that this sympathy was felt in exactly the same way by millions.

of other persons; from that consciousness to the conviction of being in the right; from the conviction of being in the right, to action. For, he thought, the possession of the truth did not merely permit, it also imposed, action. Action was a confirmation of one's own normality that must be provided both for oneself and for others; for it was not normality at all unless it was deepened and reinforced and demonstrated continually.

By this time he had arrived. The big, open archway of the Ministry was on the other side of the street, beyond a double row of moving cars and buses. He waited a moment and then slipped in behind a large black car that was making for the same archway. He followed the car in, gave the commissionaire the name of the official he wanted to speak to, and then sat down in the waiting room, almost pleased to be waiting there like other people, among other people. He had no feeling of haste or impatience, nor of intolerance for the routine and etiquette of the Ministry. On the contrary this routine, this etiquette pleased him, as symbols of a yet vaster and more general routine and etiquette, and he adapted himself willingly to them. He felt perfectly calm and cool, even if—and this was nothing new to him—a little sad.

was a sadness of a mysterious kind he had come to consider, by now, as inseparable from his character. He had always been sad in this way, lacking in gaiety, like some lake in whose waters is reflected a very high mountain that shuts out the sunlight from it and makes it black and melancholy. One knows that if the mountain could be removed the sun would bring a smile to the face of the waters, but the mountain is always there and the lake is always sad. Like the lake, he too was sad, but what the mountain was, he could not have told.

The waiting room, a small room leading out of the porter's lodge, was filled with a heterogeneous mixture of people, quite the opposite of what one might have expected to find in the antichamber of a Ministry so famous for the elegance and social distinction of its officials. Three individuals of debauched and sinister appearance—informers, perhaps, or plain-clothes policemen—were smoking and chattering together in low voices

next to a young woman with black hair and a white and red face, who was gaudily painted and dressed and was to all appearances a prostitute of the lowest kind. Next was an old man, cleanly though poorly dressed in black, with a white mustache and beard, possibly a school-teacher. Finally, next to Marcello himself, a small, thin, gray-haired woman with a troubled, anxious expression, who looked like a housewife and mother.

He observed all these people stealthily, with a strong feeling of repugnance. This was what always happened to him. He thought he was normal and just like everyone else when he pictured the crowd to himself as an abstract whole, as a great, existing army held together by common feelings, common ideals, common aims, an army of which it was comforting to form a part. But as soon as individuals rose to the surface of this crowd, his illusion of normality broke to pieces against their diversity, since he failed completely to recognize himself in them and felt at the same time both repugnance and detachment. What was there in common between him and those three sinister, vulgar men, between him and that woman of the streets, between him and that white-haired old man, between him and that humble, worn-out mother? Nothing at all, except for the repulsion, the pity, that he felt. "Clerici," called the voice of the commissioner. He started and rose to his feet. "First staircase on the right." Without turning, he went off in the direction he had been shown.

He walked up a very wide staircase with a narrow red carpet in the middle and found himself, after the second flight of stairs, on a vast landing with three large double doors opening from it. He went to the door in the middle, opened it and came into a big, half-dark room. In it was a long, massive table, and on the table, in the middle, a globe. Marcello walked about this room for a few moments (evidently, judging by the half-closed shutters and the covers over the settees along the walls, it was not in use), then opened one of the many doors and came out into a dark, narrow passage with glass-fronted bookshelves on each side. At the end of the passage was a partly closed door with light coming through the crack.

Marcello went up to it, hesitated, and then very gently pushed the door slightly. It was not so much curiosity that urged him to this as a desire to find an attendant to show him the way to the room he was looking for. Peeping in through the crack he realized that his suspicion that he had come to the wrong place was not unfounded. In front of him was a long, narrow room into which a suave light penetrated from a single, yellow curtained window. In front of the window was a table, and sitting at the table with his back profiled against the window was a young man with a broad, massive face and a plump figure.

Standing by the table, with her back toward him, Marcello could see a woman in a light dress with a pattern of big black flowers on a white background, and a wide black hat of gauze and lace. She was very tall and very slim in the waist, but broad in the shoulders and hips, with long legs and thin calves. She was leaning over the table and talking in a low voice to the man who sat quite still listening to her, in profile, looking not at her but at his own hand playing with a pencil on the slope of the desk in front of him. Then she moved over and stood close to the armchair, opposite the man, her back against the desk and facing the window, in a more confidential attitude; but the black hat tilted over her eye prevented Marcello from seeing her face. She hesitated, then bent over sideways and with an awkward movement, bending one leg—like someone stooping down to catch the jet of a fountain in his mouth—sought the man's lips with her own, while he allowed himself to be kissed without moving or giving the slightest visible sign that the kiss was agreeable to him. She threw herself backward again, both her own and the man's face hidden by the wide sweep of her hat, and staggered and would have lost her balance had not the man put his arm round her waist and held her up. Then she stood upright, and the man sitting in the chair was concealed by her body. It looked as if she might be stroking his head. The man's arm was still round her waist; then he appeared to relax his hold and his thick, square hand, as though pulled downward by its own weight, slid onto

the woman's buttock and remained there open and with fingers spread wide, like a crab or a spider on a smooth, spherical surface that provides no foothold. Marcello closed the door again.

He went back along the passage to the room where the globe stood. What he had seen confirmed the Ministry's reputation for libertinism, for the man sitting at the desk in the room was the Minister himself and Marcello had at once recognized him; but strangely enough, in spite of his inclination to make moral judgments, this did not make any impression on the background of his convictions. Marcello was not conscious of any liking for this social, woman-chasing minister, in fact he rather disliked him; and the intrusion of his love-life into his office seemed to him highly unbecoming. But none of this affected in the slightest degree his political beliefs. It was like being told, by trustworthy people, that other important personages were thieves or incompetent or used their political influence for personal ends. He registered these items of news with a rather gloomy feeling of indifference as things that did not concern him, inasmuch as he had made his choice once and for all and did not intend to alter it. He felt moreover that such things did not surprise him because he had, in a sense, discounted them from time immemorial owing to precocious knowledge of the less amiable characteristics of mankind. But he was above all conscious that, between his loyalty to the regime and the highly rigid moral standards that governed his own conduct, there could be no possible relation. The reasons for his loyalty had origins deeper than any moral criterion and could not be shaken by a hand feeling a woman's hip in a government office, or by a theft, or by any other crime or error. What those origins were, he could not have stated precisely; between them and his conscious thought stood the dull, opaque barrier of his obstinate melancholy.

Calmly, impassively, patiently he went to another of the doors, glanced through it into another corridor, drew back, tried a third door and at last found his way into the antechamber he was seeking. There were people sitting on the settees round the walls, and gold-laced com-

missionaires stood in the doorways. In a low voice he gave one of them the name of the official he wished to see, and then went and sat down on one of the settees. To while away the time he opened the newspaper again. The news of the victory in Spain was printed right across the top, and this irritated him as an extravagance in doubtful taste. He reread the message in heavy type announcing the victory and then went on to a long despatch, but gave up reading it almost at once because he was annoyed by the mannered, would-be soldierly style of the special correspondent. He stopped a moment to ask himself how he would have written this article, and was surprised to find himself thinking that if they had depended upon him, not merely the article from Spain but all the other aspects of the regime as well, from the least important to the most showy, would have been entirely different. In reality, he thought, there was practically nothing about the regime that he did not dislike profoundly; yet that was the path he had chosen and he must stick to it. He opened the paper again and skimmed over a few other news items, carefully avoiding patriotic or propagandist articles. Then at last he raised his eyes from the paper and looked round the room.

There was no one left but one old gentleman with a round white head and a ruddy face imprinted with an expression of mingled impudence, cupidity and cunning. Dressed in light colors, with a youthful, sport jacket with a slit at the back, heavy crepe-soled shoes and a gay tie, he assumed an air of being quite at home in the Ministry, walking up and down the room and calling out questions in a self-possessed, joking, impatient way to the obsequious ushers who stood at the doors. Then one of the doors opened and out came a bald, middle-aged man, thin except for a prominent paunch, with a drawn, yellow face, eyes buried deep in big, dark sockets, and a brisk, skeptical, witty expression on his sharp features. The old man went straight up to him with an exclamation of humorous protest, the other man greeted him in a ceremonious, deferential manner, and then the old man, with a confidential gesture, took hold of the yellow-faced man not by the arm but actually around the waist,

he had been a woman, and as he walked beside him
ss the room, he began speaking in a low, urgent
sper.

Marcello had followed the scene with an indifferent
then all of a sudden he realized to his surprise that
felt a crazy sort of hatred for the old man, for some
on unknown to himself. Marcello was aware that at
moment and for the most diverse reasons an excess
 hatred of this kind might rise up to the dead surface
is accustomed apathy, unexpected as a monster emerg-
from a motionless sea; yet each time it happened he
astonished at coming face to face with an unknown
ect of his own character, which all its other aspects,
well-known and so secure, seemed to contradict. This
man, for instance—he felt he could kill him, or have
killed, with the greatest ease; in fact he wanted to
him. And why? Perhaps it was because he saw skep-
m, the fault he most hated, so plainly written upon
rubicund countenance. Or was it because his jacket
a slit at the back and the old man's hand in his
ket raised a flap of the material, thus revealing the
der part of his too-limp and too-full pants and so gave
revolting impression of a dummy in a tailor shop
dow? Anyhow he hated him, and with an intensity
trong and so insufferable that he preferred, in the
, to lower his eyes and read the newspaper again.
en he looked up again the old man and his com-
ion had disappeared and the room was empty.

After a short time one of the ushers came and mur-
red to him that he could be received now, and Mar-
o rose and followed him. The usher opened one of
doors and showed him in. Marcello found himself
spacious room with frescoed walls and ceiling, at the
end of which was a table covered with papers. Behind
table was sitting the yellow-faced man whom he had
ady seen in the other room; at the side sat another
n whom Marcello knew well, his own immediate
erior in the Secret Service. As Marcello came in the
ow-faced man, who was one of the Minister's secre-
es, rose to his feet; the other man remained seated and
eted him with a nod. The latter, a thin old man

military appearance, with a scarlet, wooden-looking face and a pair of mustaches of an improbable, mask-like blackness and bristliness, formed a complete contrast with the secretary. He was a loyal, rigid, honest man, accustomed to carrying out orders without discussion, putting what he considered to be his duty above everything, even above conscience; whereas the secretary, from what Marcello remembered hearing, was a man of a more recent and entirely different type—ambitious, skeptical, of social tastes, with a passion for intrigue that was carried to the point of cruelty, beyond all professional obligation and all limit of conscience. Marcello's whole preference was, naturally, for the old man, for the added reason that he thought he could discern, in that red and ravaged face, the same obscure melancholy that so often oppressed himself. Perhaps like him Colonel Baudino was aware of the contrast between a rigid, almost bewitched loyalty with nothing rational about it and the too often deplorable aspects of everyday reality. But perhaps, he thought again as he looked at the old man, perhaps it was only an illusion; perhaps he himself was, out of sympathy, endowing his superior with his own feelings in the hope of not being the only one to experience them.

The colonel, without looking either at Marcello or at the secretary, said drily, "This is Dr. Clerici about whom I spoke to you not long ago." The secretary, with a ceremonious, almost ironical promptitude, leaned across the table, held out his hand and invited him to be seated. Marcello sat down; the secretary sat down, took a box of cigarettes and offered it first to the colonel, who refused, and then to Marcello, who accepted. After he himself had also lit a cigarette, he said, "Clerici, I'm very pleased to make your acquaintance . . . The Colonel, here, never stops singing your praises . . . From all he says you seem to be an 'ace' as they call it." He underlined the words "as they call it" with a smile, and then went on: "We've gone carefully over your plan with the Minister and we judge it to be quite excellent . . . You know Quadri well?"

"Yes," said Marcello, "he was my tutor at the University."

"And you're sure Quadri knows nothing of your official position?"

"I don't think so."

"Your idea of a faked political conversion with the object of inspiring confidence and getting inside their organization and even contriving to be entrusted with a job in Italy," went on the secretary, looking down at some notes in front of him on the table, "is a good one . . . The Minister, too, agrees that something of the kind should be tried without any delay . . . When would you feel inclined to start, Clerici?"

"As soon as required."

"Excellent," said the secretary, a little surprised, nevertheless, as if he had expected the answer to be different. "admirable . . . However there's one point that must be made clear . . . You're proposing to carry out a—let us say—rather delicate, dangerous mission . . . and we were saying, with the Colonel, that in order not to be conspicuous you ought to find, to think out, to invent some plausible pretext for your presence in Paris . . . I'm not saying that they'd know who you are or would be in a position to discover . . . but, in a word, you can't be too careful—all the more so since Quadri, as you tell us in your report, was perfectly well aware at one time of your feelings of loyalty towards the regime. . . ."

"If it hadn't been for those feelings," Marcello observed drily, "there couldn't have been my conversion either . . ."

"Of course, exactly . . . But one doesn't go to Paris on purpose to call at Quadri's and say to him, 'Here I am.' No, you must give the impression of happening to be in Paris for private reasons—nonpolitical reasons—and of taking advantage of this to tell Quadri all about your spiritual crisis . . . What you must do," concluded the secretary, looking up at Marcello, "is to combine your mission with something personal, something unofficial." The secretary turned toward the colonel and added, "Don't you think so, Colonel?"

"Yes, that's my opinion," said the colonel, raising his eyes. After a moment he went on, "Dr. Clerici can find the pretext that's new."

Marcello bent his head, having no particular idea on the subject. It seemed to him that no answer could be made for the moment, since such a pretext required calm examination. He was on the point of replying, "Give me two or three days to think about it," when suddenly his tongue spoke for him almost against his will. "I'm getting married in a week's time . . . The mission could be combined with my honeymoon."

This time the secretary's surprise, though immediately covered by a prompt enthusiasm, was obvious and profound. The colonel, on the other hand, remained entirely passive, just as though Marcello had not spoken. "Excellent . . . admirable," exclaimed the secretary, looking rather disconcerted; "you're getting married . . . no better pretext could possibly be found . . . the classic Paris honeymoon."

"Yes," said Marcello without smiling, "the classic Paris honeymoon."

The secretary was afraid that he had offended him. "What I meant was that Paris is just the right place for a honeymoon . . . Of course I'm not married . . . but if I was going to be, I think I should go to Paris too."

This time Marcello did not speak. It often happened that his answer to people he did not like took this form—complete silence. The secretary, in order to recover himself, turned to the colonel and said, "You're quite right, colonel . . . Only Dr. Clerici could have found such a pretext . . . We, even if we'd found it, couldn't have suggested it to him."

This remark, uttered in an ambiguous, half-serious tone of voice, could be taken, thought Marcello, in two ways. It could be meant as a real if slightly ironical praise, as much as to say, "Devil take it, what fanaticism!"; or it could be the expression of a feeling of amazed contempt, "What servility! He doesn't even respect his own marriage." Probably, he thought, it was both these things, since it was clear that in the case of the secretary himself the boundary between fanaticism and servility was not very precisely marked; both of them were means that he used to achieve the same ends. He noticed with satisfaction that the colonel, too, withheld from the secretary

the smile which the latter's double-edged remark seemed to be asking for. A moment's silence ensued. Marcello was now looking straight into the secretary's eyes with a fixity and a lack of timidity that he both knew and wished to be disconcerting. The secretary did not return his look, but, leaning with both hands on the top of the table, rose to his feet.

"All right, then . . . Colonel, will you and Dr. Clerici make all necessary arrangements about the practical details of the mission? . . . And you," he went on, turning towards Marcello, "I want you to understand that you have the full support of the Minister as well as mine . . . In fact," he added, with an affectation of casualness, "the Minister has expressed the wish to make your personal acquaintance."

Once again Marcello did not open his mouth; all he did was to rise to his feet and make a slight, deferential bow. The secretary, who was perhaps expecting some words of gratitude, again made a movement of surprise that he quickly repressed. "Wait a moment, Clerici . . . He told me to take you straight to him now."

The colonel rose and said, "Clerici, you know where to find me." He held out his hand to the secretary, but the latter insisted on accompanying him to the door with ceremonious, obsequious zeal. Marcello saw them shake hands, and then the colonel vanished and the secretary came back to him.

"Come along, Clerici," he said. "The Minister is extremely busy, but in spite of that he insists on seeing you in order to show how pleased he is with you . . . It's the first time, isn't it, that you've been taken in to see the Minister?" These words were spoken as they were crossing a small antechamber adjoining the secretary's room. The latter went to a door, opened it and disappeared, making a sign to him to wait, and then, almost immediately reappeared and invited him to follow.

Marcello entered the same long, narrow room that he had looked into not long before through the crack in the door, only now the room lay before him in breadth, with the table in front of him. Behind the table was sitting the man with the broad, massive face and plump figure that

had peeped in upon as the Minister was allowing himself to be kissed by the woman in the big black hat. Marcello noticed that the table was quite bare, polished like a mirror, with no papers on it, only a large bronze clock and a closed portfolio of dark-colored leather. "Excellency, this is Dr. Clerici," said the secretary.

The Minister rose and held out his hand to Marcello with a zealous cordiality even more conspicuous than that of the secretary, but entirely lacking in pleasantness, the fact decidedly commanding. "How are you, Clerici?" he pronounced his words slowly and with care, haughtily, as though they contained some special meaning. "I hear you spoken of in the highest terms . . . The regime has need of men like you." The Minister sat down again, took his handkerchief out of his pocket and blew his nose, at the same time examining certain papers that the secretary laid before him. Marcello retired discreetly toward the farthest corner of the room. The Minister looked at the papers while the secretary whispered in his ear, then he looked at his handkerchief, and Marcello saw that the white linen was stained with scarlet. He remembered that as he had come into the room the Minister's mouth had looked to him unnaturally red—with lipstick from the woman in the black hat. Still examining the papers that the secretary was showing him, displaying no embarrassment, no concern at being observed, the Minister started vigorously rubbing his mouth with his handkerchief, looking at it every now and then to see if the lipstick was still coming off. At last his examination of the papers and of the handkerchief came to a simultaneous end, and the Minister rose to his feet and again held out his hand to Marcello. "Good-bye, Clerici," he said; "as my secretary will have already told you, the mission you are undertaking has my complete and unqualified support."

Marcello bowed, grasped the thick, square hand, and followed the secretary out of the room.

They went back to the secretary's room. The latter put down on the table the papers that had been examined by the Minister and then accompanied Marcello to the door. "Well then, Clerici, into the lion's mouth!" he said with

a smile, "and best wishes for your marriage." Marcello thanked him with a nod and a bow and a murmured phrase. The secretary, with a last smile, shook his hand. Then the door closed.

CHAPTER 5

IT WAS late now and, as soon as he came out of the Ministry, Marcello hastened his step. He took his place in the line at the bus stop, in the midst of the hungry, irritable midday crowd, and patiently awaited his turn to get on to the already crowded vehicle. He accomplished part of his journey hanging on outside, on the step, then with a great effort managed to squeeze himself onto the platform; and there he remained, hemmed in on every side by other passengers, while the bus, jolting and roaring, climbed up the steep streets running from the center of the town to the suburbs.

These discomforts did not worry him; in fact he found them helpful to him, inasmuch as they were shared with so many others and contributed, if only in a small degree, to make him like everybody else. Besides, contacts with a crowd, however disagreeable and inconvenient, pleased him and always seemed to him preferable to contacts with individuals. From a crowd, he thought, raising himself on tiptoe to breathe more freely, from a crowd he derived the comforting feeling of many-sided fellowship, whether it was a matter of cramming oneself into a bus or of patriotic enthusiasm at political meetings; whereas from individuals he derived nothing but doubts, both about himself and about others—which was what had happened that morning during his visit to the Ministry.

Why, for instance, why, the moment after he had offered to combine his mission with his honeymoon, had he experienced that painful feeling of having performed an act either of gratuitous servility or of clumsy ~~servility~~ ~~cism~~? Because, he told himself, the offer

to that skeptical, designing, corrupt man, that despicable, odious secretary. It was he who, by his mere presence, had inspired in him a sense of shame for an act which had in reality been profoundly spontaneous and disinterested. And now, while the bus rolled on from one stop to another, he excused himself by saying that he would not have had a sense of shame if he had not found himself face to face with a man like that, a man for whom neither loyalty nor devotion nor sacrifice existed, but only calculation, discretion, self-interest. His offer had not sprung from any mental speculation but from the obscure depths of his spirit—a sure proof, apart from anything else, of the authentic nature of his absorption into social and political normality. Another man—the secretary, for instance—would only have made such an offer after long and careful calculation; he had made it on the spur of the moment. As for the impropriety of combining his honeymoon with a political mission, it was not worth wasting time even in thinking about it. He was what he was, and all that he did was right if it was governed by what he was.

With these thoughts in his mind he got off the bus and walked along the street of this quarter where minor officials lived, on a pavement bordered with white and pink oleanders. The great doorways of massive, shabby blocks of flats occupied by government officials opened on to this pavement, and through them one could see vast, dreary courtyards. Alternating with the doorways was a series of modest shops that Marcello knew well—the tobacconist, the baker, the grocer, the butcher, the druggist. It was midday and there were many revealing signs, even in these humble concerns, of the mild and transitory gaiety that comes with the breaking-off of work and the family gathering—smells of cooking coming from half-closed windows on the ground floor; badly dressed men hurrying into doorways, almost at a run; voices on the radio and the sound of a phonograph. From a little enclosed garden in a recess of one of the buildings an espalier of climbing roses on the railings greeted him with a wave of sharp, dusty fragrance. Marcello quickened his step and went in at the doorway marked 19.

together with two or three other officials—and imitating their haste, not without satisfaction—started to walk up the stairs.

He went slowly up the broad stairs, where dreary twilight alternated with sumptuous light from big windows on the landings. But at the second floor he remembered that he had forgotten something—the flowers he never failed to bring to his fiancée each time he was invited to lunch at her home. Glad that he remembered in time, he ran down the stairs again, went out into the street and walked straight to the corner of the building, where a woman squatted on a stool with a few jars of seasonal flowers in front of her. He hurriedly selected half a dozen roses, the best the flower seller had, tall and straight stalked, dark red in color, and, holding them to his nose to breathe their perfume, went back into the building and upstairs, this time to the top floor. Here, there was only one door on the landing, and a smaller staircase led up to a little rustic door, underneath which a brilliant light shone from an open terrace. He rang the bell, thinking "Let's hope her mother doesn't come and open the door to me." For his future mother-in-law displayed an almost doting love for him that embarrassed him profoundly.

A moment later the door opened and Marcello was relieved to see in the dim light of the hall the figure of the little servant girl—almost a child—bunched up in a white apron much too big for her, her pale face crowned by a double coil of black plaits. She shut the door again, but not before she had stuck her head out for a moment to peer inquisitively onto the landing; while Marcello, breathing in the strong smell of cooking that filled the air, went through into the drawing room.

The window of this room was almost closed, to keep out the heat and light, but it was still possible in the dimness to distinguish the dark, sham-Renaissance furniture that cumbered it. They were massive pieces, severe, heavily carved, and they made a curious contrast with the ornaments scattered about the room on brackets and on the small table, all of them in a coquettish but rather out-of-date taste—a little nude woman kneeling on the edge of an ash tray, a blue pottery sailor playing the

accordion, a group of white and black dogs, two or three lamps shaped like buds or flowers. There were many ash trays made of metal or china which originally, Marcello knew, had contained wedding sweetmeats from friends or relations of his fiancée. The walls were hung with red, imitation damask, and bright-colored landscapes and still-life paintings in black frames were hung upon them. Marcello sat down on the sofa, already clothed in its summer covering, and looked round with satisfaction. It was a real middle-class home, he reflected once again, the home of a middle-class family of the most conventional and most modest type, similar in every way to other homes in this same building, in this same quarter, and this was for him its most pleasing aspect—the sensation of finding himself face to face with something absolutely ordinary, almost common, and yet completely reassuring. He was aware of an almost abject feeling of complacency at the ugliness of the house. He himself had grown up in a pretty house where everything was in good taste, and he realized that everything that surrounded him at this moment was hopelessly ugly; but it was just this that he needed, this perfectly anonymous ugliness, as a further means of bringing him into line with his equals.

He remembered that for lack of money—anyhow for the first few years—the two of them, Giulia and he, would have to live in this house after they were married, and he almost blessed their poverty. By himself, following his own taste, he would never have been capable of making his home look so ugly and so ordinary. Quite soon, then, this room would be his own sitting room; just as the "art-nouveau" bedroom, in which his future mother-in-law and her late husband had slept for thirty years, would be his bedroom, and the mahogany dining room in which Giulia and her parents had eaten their meals twice a day for the whole of their lives would be his dining room. Giulia's father had been an important official in one of the ministries, and this home of his, furnished according to the taste of the period when he was young, was a kind of temple elevated in rather a touching manner in honor of the twin divinities of respectability and normality.

Soon, he thought, with a joy that was almost greedy, almost lascivious yet at the same time melancholy, soon he would be absorbed rightfully into this normality and this respectability.

The door opened and Giulia came rushing in, talking to someone in the passage, perhaps the maid. When she had finished talking she closed the door and hurried over to her fiancé. Giulia, at twenty, was as handsomely developed as a woman of thirty, with a slightly coarse, almost vulgar yet fresh and solid handsomeness that showed her youthfulness and also gave an indefinable impression of a capacity for sensual self-deception and enjoyment. She had a very white skin, large eyes of a dark and languid clearness, thick, wavy chestnut hair and full, red lips. Marcello, as he saw her coming toward him in a light, tailormade suit through which the curves of her exuberant figure seemed to be bursting, could not help thinking with renewed satisfaction that he was marrying a really normal, ordinary girl, very similar to the drawing room that had just given him such a feeling of relief. And the same feeling of relief and comfort came over him when he heard once again her drawling, good-natured voice with its local accent saying: "What lovely roses! . . . But why? I've already told you you mustn't bother . . . It's not as if it was the first time you were coming to lunch with us." As she spoke, she walked across and put the roses into a blue vase that stood on a yellow marble column in a corner of the room.

"I like to bring you flowers," said Marcello.

Giulia gave a sigh of satisfaction and plumped down on the sofa beside him. Marcello looked at her and noticed that a sudden embarrassment—unmistakable sign of incipient excitement—had taken the place of the impulsive self-possession of a moment before. Then, all at once, she turned toward him and, throwing her arms round his neck, murmured, "Give me a kiss."

Marcello put his arm round her waist and kissed her on the mouth. Giulia was of a sensual nature, and in these kisses—which were almost always demanded by her from a reluctant Marcello—there came invariably a mo-

ment when this sensuality of hers crept in in an aggressive manner and altered the chaste, pre-ordained character of their relations as an engaged couple. This time again, just when their lips were on the point of separating, she seemed to be carried away by a violent onslaught of desire, and throwing her arm suddenly round Marcello's neck, pressed her mouth once more fiercely against his. He felt her tongue work its way between his lips and then move rapidly round, twisting and turning inside his mouth. Meanwhile she had seized his hand and was holding it against her body, guiding it until it lay clasping her left breast. At the same time she was blowing through her nostrils and breathing hard, with an innocent, unsatisfied, animal sound.

Marcello was not in love with his future wife; but he liked Giulia and these sensual embraces never failed to excite him. But he did not feel inclined to reciprocate the transports; he wished his relations with his fiancée to be kept within the bounds of tradition, feeling that a greater intimacy would reintroduce into his life the disorder, the abnormality that he was all the time seeking to banish. After a moment he took his hand away from her breast and very gently pushed her away. "Oh, how cold you are!" said Giulia, withdrawing from him and looking at him with a smile. "Really there are times when I think you aren't fond of me at all."

"You know I'm fond of you," said Marcello.

She went on talking volubly. "I'm so pleased when you say that," she said. "I've never been so happy . . . In the way, d'you know, just this morning Mummy was insisting that we must have her bedroom . . . She'll go into that little room at the end of the passage . . . What d'you think about it? . . . Ought we to accept?"

"I think," said Marcello, "that she wouldn't like it if we refused."

"That's what I think too . . . Just fancy, when I was a little girl I used to dream of sleeping one day in a room like that . . . Now I don't know whether I like it so much . . . D'you like it?" she asked, in a doubtful and at the same time complacent tone of voice, as if she were

afraid of his criticism of her taste and also anxious to have it approved.

Marcello hastened to reply: "I like it very much . . . It's a lovely room!" And he saw that these words aroused a visible satisfaction in Giulia.

Delighted, she planted a kiss on his cheek and went on. "This morning I ran into Signora Persico . . . I invited her to the reception . . . D'you know, she didn't know I was getting married? . . . She asked me such a lot of questions . . . When I told her who you were, she told me she knew your mother . . . She met her at the seaside some years ago."

Marcello said nothing. It was always highly disagreeable to him to talk about his mother, with whom he had not lived for years and whom he rarely saw. Giulia, unaware of his embarrassment, went on chattering and again changed the subject. "Now, about the reception . . . We've made out a list of people to be invited . . . Would you like to see it?"

"Yes, let me see it."

She drew a sheet of paper out of her pocket and handed it to him. Marcello took it and looked at it. It was a long list of names, grouped by families—fathers, mothers, daughters, sons. Then men were indicated not only by their Christian names and surnames but by their professional designations as well—doctors, lawyers, engineers, professors; and, if they had them, by their titles too—*Commendatore*, *Grande Ufficiale*, *Cavaliere*. Beside each family Giulia, to be on the safe side, had written down the number of persons that composed it—three, five, two, four. Almost all the names were unknown to Marcello, yet he felt he had known them for a long time. They were all essentially middle-class people, in the professions or the civil service, people who had homes exactly like this one, with drawing rooms like this and furniture like this; and they had marriageable daughters very like Giulia, whom they married off to young officials with doctor's degrees very similar, he hoped, to himself. He examined the long list, pausing at some of the most characteristic,

ordinary names, with a profound satisfaction tinged with his usual cold, settled melancholy. "Now who, for instance, is Arcangeli?" he could not help asking, taking a name at random. "Commendatore Giuseppe Arcangeli, with his wife Iole, his daughters Cilvana and Beatrice and his son Dr. Gino?"

"Never mind, you don't know them . . . Arcangeli was a friend of poor Daddy's at the Ministry."

"Where does he live?"

"Two steps from here, in Via Porpora."

"And what's his drawing room like?"

"You do ask the funniest questions, you know," she exclaimed with a laugh. "Why, what d'you expect it to be like? It's a room just like this one and like lots of others too . . . Why does it interest you so much to know what the Arcangeli's drawing-room is like?"

"And the daughters, are they engaged to be married?"

"Yes, Beatrice is . . . But why . . . ?"

"What's her fiancé like?"

"Well really—you even want to know about him! Well, he's got an odd name, Schirinzi, and he works in a lawyer's office."

Marcello noted that no inferences of any kind as to the nature of her guests could be deduced from Giulia's answers. Probably they had no more character in her mind than they had on the piece of paper: they were simply names of respectable, indistinguishable, normal people. He ran his eye down the list again and stopped at random at another name. "And who is Dr. Cesare Spadoni, with his wife Livia and his lawyer brother Tullio?"

"He's a children's doctor . . . His wife was at school with me. You may have met her—very attractive, dark, small, pale . . . He's a good-looking young man, clever too, and well-bred . . . The brother's good-looking too . . . They're twins."

"And Cavaliere Luigi Pace and his wife Teresa and his four sons, Maurizio, Giovanni, Vittorio and Riccardo?"

"Another of poor Daddy's friends . . . The sons are all students . . . Riccardo's still at school."

Marcello saw that it was useless to go on asking for information about the people on the list. Giulia would not be able to tell him much more than could be told from the list itself. Besides, he thought, even if she gave him minute information about the characters and the lives of these people, that information would necessarily be confined within the extremely narrow limits of her own judgment and intelligence. But he was conscious of an almost voluptuous contentment—even though its voluptuous quality had no joy in it—at being able, thanks to his marriage, to enter into and become a part of this extremely ordinary society. But there was still one question on the tip of his tongue, and after a moment's hesitation he decided to put it to her: "Now tell me—am I like these guests of yours?"

"How d'you mean—physically?"

"No . . . what I want to know is whether in your opinion I have any points of resemblance with them—in manner, in look, in general appearance . . . in fact, whether I'm like them."

"For me, you're better than anyone else," she answered impetuously. "But apart from that—yes—you *are* the same sort of person . . . You're well-bred, serious-minded, clever . . . in fact, one can see that, like them, you're a good, honest person . . . But why d'you ask me that question?"

"Never mind."

"How strange you are," she said, looking at him with a kind of curiosity; "most people want to be different from everyone else . . . but you're just the opposite; anyone would think you wanted to be *like* everyone else."

Marcello said nothing, but handed the list back to her, remarking in an offhand manner, "Anyhow I don't know a single one of them."

"Well, d'you think I know them all?" said Giulia gaily. "With lots of them, it's only Mummy who knows even who they are . . . Besides, the reception is all over in a minute . . . just an hour or so, and then you'll never see them again."

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"I don't mind seeing them," said Marcello.

"I was only talking," said Giulia. "Now listen to the menu the hotel's suggested and tell me if you approve." Giulia took another piece of paper from her pocket and read aloud:

Consommé froid
Filets de Sole Meunière
Dinde au riz, sauce suprême
Salade de saison
Fromages assortis
Glace diplomatique
Fruits
Café et liqueurs

"What d'you think of it?" she asked, in the same doubtful but complacent tone in which, a short time before, she had spoken of her mother's bedroom; "d'you think it's all right? D'you think they'll have enough to eat?"

"I think it's excellent, and plenty of it too," said Marcello.

Giulia went on: "About the champagne—we chose Italian champagne . . . It's not so good as French, but for drinking toasts it's perfectly all right." She was silent for a moment, and then went on in her usual voluble way, "You know what Father Lattanzi said? That if you want to get married you must receive communion and if you want to receive communion you must go to confession . . . otherwise he won't marry us."

For a moment Marcello, taken by surprise, did not know what to say. He was not a believer and it was perhaps ten years since he had been to church. Besides, he had always been convinced that he felt a decided antipathy toward all things ecclesiastical. Now he realized to his astonishment that far from being annoyed by it, this idea of confession and communion was pleasing and attractive to him, in the same way that he was pleased and attracted by the wedding reception, by all those guests that he did not know, by his marriage to Giulia, and by Giulia, herself who was so ordinary and like so many other girls. It was a further link, he thought, in the chain of normality by which he was seeking to anchor himself in the shifting sands of life; and in addition this link was

made of a more noble, a more resistant, metal than the others—religion. He was almost surprised at not having thought of it before, and attributed this forgetfulness to the obvious, easy-going character of the religion in which he had been born and to which he had always seemed to belong, even without practicing it. Curious to know how Giulia would answer, he said, "But I'm not a believer."

"Who is?" she replied calmly. "D'you think ninety per cent of the people who go to church believe in it? And the priests themselves?"

"But *you* believe?"

Giulia waved her hand in the air. "Well, well," she said, "up to a point . . . Every now and then I say to Father Lattanzi, You don't bewitch *me* with all your stories, you priests . . . I believe them and I don't believe them . . . Or rather," she added punctiliously, "let's say that I have a religion all of my own . . . different from the religion of the priests."

What does she mean by a religion of her own, wondered Marcello. But knowing by experience that Giulia often spoke without knowing very well what she was saying, he did not press the point. Instead, he said, "My case is more serious . . . I don't believe at all, and I haven't any religion."

Giulia waved her hand gaily and indifferently. "But what does it mean to you? . . . You must go . . . It means so much to them, and it doesn't cost you anything."

"I daresay, but I shall be forced to tell a lie."

"Mere words . . . Besides, it'll be a lie for a good purpose . . . You know what Father Lattanzi says?—that you must do certain things just as if you believed, even if you don't believe . . . Faith comes afterwards."

Marcello was silent for a moment, and then said; "All right . . . I'll go to confession and then have communion." And as he spoke he was again conscious of the same thrill of slightly gloomy pleasure that the list of guests had inspired in him a little earlier. "I'll go and make my confession to Father Lattanzi," he added.

"There's no necessity for you to go to him," said Giulia; "you can go to any confessor, in any church you like."

"And how about communion?"

"Father Lattanzi will administer it the same day we get married . . . we go together . . . How long is it since you confessed?"

"Well . . . I don't think I've confessed since my first communion—when I was eight," said Marcello, rather embarrassed, "never since then."

"Just think!" she exclaimed joyfully, "what a tremendous number of sins you'll have to tell them about!"

"Supposing they won't give me absolution?"

"They'll give you absolution all right," she answered affectionately, stroking his face. "In any case, what sins can you have to confess? You're good and kind and you've never done anyone any harm . . . They'll give you absolution at once."

"It's a complicated business, getting married," said Marcello casually.

"But I love all these complications and preparations," said Giulia. "After all, we've got to stay together all the rest of our lives, haven't we? . . . Oh, by the way, what are we going to decide about the honeymoon?"

For the first time Marcello was aware of a feeling almost of pity for Giulia, apart from his usual indulgent, straightforward affection for her. He knew that there was still time for him to draw back and, instead of going to Paris, where he had his mission to fulfill, go somewhere else for their honeymoon. He could tell them, at the Ministry, that he refused the job. But at the same time he realized that this was impossible. The mission was the most resolute, the most compromising, the most decisive step on his road toward absolute and final normality; just as his marriage with Giulia, the wedding reception, religious ceremonies, confession and communion were all steps in the same direction, although, in his eyes, of less importance.

He did not pause more than a moment to analyze this thought, whose dark, almost sinister background did not escape him, but answered hurriedly: "I thought that after all we might go to Paris."

Giulia, crazy with delight, clapped her hands and exclaimed: "Ah, how wonderful . . . Paris . . . my dream!" she threw her arms round his neck and kissed him vio-

lently. "If you knew how pleased I am! But I didn't want to tell you how I was longing to go to Paris . . . I was afraid it might cost too much."

"One way and another, it'll cost about the same as other places," said Marcello. "But don't worry about the money . . . we'll manage all right this time."

Giulia was in transports of delight. "Oh, how pleased I am!" she repeated. She pressed herself violently against Marcello and murmured: "D'you love me? Why don't you give me a kiss?" And so, once again, Marcello found himself with her arms around his neck and her lips against his. This time the ardor of her kiss seemed redoubled by gratitude. Giulia sighed, she twisted her whole body about, she squeezed Marcello's hand against her breast, she rolled her tongue rapidly and spasmodically inside his mouth. Marcello felt himself becoming excited, and thought, now, this minute, if I wanted to, I could have her, here, on this sofa; and he seemed to be aware, once more, of the fragility of what he called normality. At last they separated, and Marcello said with a smile: "It's lucky we're getting married soon . . . otherwise I'm afraid we'd become lovers, one of these days."

Giulia, still flushed from the kiss, shrugged her shoulders and answered with a kind of exalted, ingenuous shamelessness: "I love you so much . . . I'd ask nothing better."

"Truly?" asked Marcello.

"Yes, this minute," she said boldly, "here, now . . ." She had taken Marcello's hand and was slowly kissing it, looking up at him with shining, impassioned eyes. Then the door opened and she drew back. Giulia's mother came in.

She too, thought Marcello as he watched her approaching, was one of the large number of characters introduced into his life by his quest for a redeeming normality. There could be nothing in common between him and this sentimental woman, always overflowing with melting tenderness—nothing except his desire to tie himself firmly and lastingly to a human society that was solid and well-established. Giulia's mother, Signora Delia Ginami, was a corpulent lady in whom the slackening processes of mature age appeared to manifest themselves in a sort of dis-

integration not only of the body but of the mind, the former being afflicted with a quivering, boneless obesity the latter with a tendency towards the languors of a kindness that was partly natural to her and partly affected. With every step she took, beneath her shapeless clothes whole portions of her swollen body appeared to be heeling over and shifting on their own account, and the slightest trifle was enough to provoke an agonizing emotional disturbance that overcame her powers of control, filling her watery blue eyes with tears, causing her to wring her hands in attitudes of ecstasy. During this period, the imminent marriage of her only daughter had plunged Signora Delia into a condition of perpetual sensibility. She was always weeping—with contentment, as she explained—and she felt, constantly a need to embrace Giulia or her future son-in-law, for whom, she said, she already felt as much affection as if he were her own son. Marcello, filled with embarrassment by these effusions, understood nevertheless that they were merely one aspect of the reality into which he wanted to be absorbed, and as such he endured and appreciated them with the same rather somber satisfaction as was inspired in him by the ugly furniture in the house, by Giulia's conversation, by the wedding celebrations and the ritual demands of Father Lattanzi.

At this moment, however, Signora Delia was in a state not so much of tenderness as of indignation. She was washing a sheet of paper and, after greeting Marcello who had risen to his feet, said, "An anonymous letter . . . but first let's go to the other room . . . it's ready."

"An anonymous letter?" cried Giulia, rushing after her mother.

"Yes, an anonymous letter . . . How disgusting people are!"

Marcello followed them into the dining room, trying to hide his face behind his handkerchief. The news of the anonymous letter seriously disturbed him, and he was determined not to let the two women see it. To hear Giulia's mother exclaim, "An anonymous letter," and immediately to think, "Someone has written about the Lino affair," were for him one and the same thing. The blood

had left his face, he had caught his breath and had been overwhelmed by a feeling of consternation, of shock and of fear, inexplicable, unexpected, shattering, something such as he had never known except in the first years of adolescence when the memory of Lino was still fresh. It had been too strong for him; and all his powers of resistance had been swept away in an instant, just as a thin crowd of policemen might be swept away by the panic-stricken crowd it is supposed to hold back. As he approached the table he bit his lip till it bled. He had been wrong when he had looked up the notice of the crime in the library and had been convinced that the old wound was completely healed; not merely was the wound not healed, but it was far deeper than he had suspected. Luck had placed at the head of the table was against the light, with his back to the window. Stiffly and in silence he sat down with Giulia on his right and Signora Ginami on his left.

The anonymous letter now lay on the tablecloth beside Giulia's mother's plate. The little servant girl came in, holding in both hands a large dish of spaghetti. Marcello plunged the fork into the red, greasy tangle and lifted a small quantity of it on to his own plate. Immediately the two women began to protest. "Not enough . . . you're trying to starve yourself . . . take some more." And Signora Ginami added, "You're so hard, you must eat." And Giulia impulsively took more of the spaghetti from the dish and put it on her fiancé's plate.

"I'm not hungry," said Marcello, in a voice that sounded to him absurdly exhausted and distressed.

"Appetite comes with eating," replied Giulia earnestly, mechanically helping herself.

The maid went out, carrying away the almost empty dish, and Giulia's mother said at once, "I didn't mean to show it . . . It didn't seem to me worth showing . . . But what a world we live in!"

Marcello said nothing; he bent his face over his plate and filled his mouth with spaghetti. He still feared the letter was concerned with the Lino affair, although his reason told him that this was impossible. But an uncontrollable fear, a fear more powerful than

effection. Giulia asked, "But surely, mayn't we know what the letter's about?"

Her mother answered, "First of all I want to tell Marcello that, as far as I am concerned, even if the letter contained things a thousand times worse, he can still be sure that my affection for him remains unchanged . . . Marcello, you're a real son to me, and you know that a mother's love for a son is stronger than any insinuation." Her eyes filled with tears, she repeated, "A real son," and seizing Marcello's hand, she carried it to her heart, saying, "Dear Marcello!" Not knowing what to do or say, Marcello sat motionless and silent, waiting for the effusion to finish. Signora Ginami gazed at him with tenderness in her eyes and then added, "You must forgive an old woman like me, Marcello."

"Don't be absurd, Mummy; you're not old," said Giulia, too well accustomed to these emotional disturbances on her mother's part to attach importance to them or to be surprised.

"Yes, I'm an old woman, I've only a few more years to live," replied Signora Delia. Imminent death was one of her favorite subjects of conversation, for it was not only a moving subject to her, but she thought, perhaps, that it also had the power to move others. "I shall die soon," she went on, "and that's why I'm so very, very pleased to be leaving my daughter in the charge of such a good man, Marcello."

Marcello—who, with his hand held firmly against her heart by Signora Delia, was forced into a most uncomfortable position over the top of his plate of spaghetti—could not repress a very slight movement of impatience that did not escape the old woman. She mistook it for a protest against what he considered to be excessive praise. "Yes, it's true," she repeated; "you *are* good . . . you are so good . . . Sometimes I say to Giulia, 'You're a lucky girl to have found such a good young man.' I know quite well, Marcello, that goodness is out of fashion nowadays . . . but you must allow someone who's many years older than you to say it—nothing in the world matters except goodness . . . And you, luckily, you are so very, very, very good."

Marcello frowned and said nothing. "Do let the poor man have something to eat," exclaimed Giulia, "don't you see you're dirtying his sleeve in the gravy?"

Signora Ginami let go Marcello's hand, and taking up the letter, said, "It's a typewritten letter . . . with a Rome postmark . . . I shouldn't be surprised, Marcello, if one of your colleagues at the office hadn't written it."

"But, Mummy, once and for all, mayn't we know what's in it?"

"Here it is," said her mother, handing the letter to Giulia. "Read it . . . but don't read it aloud . . . There are nasty things in it that I don't want to hear . . . Then, when you've read it, give it to Marcello."

Not without some anxiety, Marcello watched his fiancée read the letter. Then, twisting her mouth in scorn, "How disgusting!" Giulia pronounced, and handed it to him. The letter, written on thin typewriter paper, contained only a few lines in the faint ink of a worn-out ribbon. "Signora, in allowing your daughter to marry Dr. Clerici, you are committing something worse than an error, you are committing a crime. Dr. Clerici's father has for years been shut up in a lunatic asylum, with a form of madness which is of syphilitic origin; and, as you know, this malady is hereditary. There is still time; stop the marriage. A friend."

"So that's all," thought Marcello, almost disappointed. He seemed to be aware that his disappointment was greater than his relief. It was as if he had been hoping that someone else might share the knowledge of the tragedy of his childhood and so might free him, in part, from the burden of that knowledge. There was one phrase, nevertheless, that struck him: "As you know, this malady is hereditary." He knew perfectly well that the origin of his father's madness was not syphilitic, and that there was no danger of his going mad, some day, in the way his father had done. And yet that phrase, in all its threatening malignity, seemed to him to allude to some other form of madness that might really be hereditary. This idea he immediately dismissed, no more than touched the surface of his mind. Then he handed back the letter to his mother, saying calmly, "There's no truth."

"I know there's no truth in it," answered the good lady, almost offended. After a moment she went on, "I only know that my daughter is marrying a man who is good, intelligent, honest, serious minded . . . and good-looking too," she added coquettishly.

"Quite particularly good-looking: you needn't be shy about saying so," Giulia confirmed, "and that's why whoever wrote the letter insinuates that he's tainted . . . Seeing him so good-looking, he can't believe that there isn't some hidden worm . . . Brutes . . ."

"I wonder what they would say," Marcello could not help thinking, "if they knew that at the age of thirteen I very nearly had sexual relations with a man, and that I killed him." He noticed, now that the fear aroused by the letter had passed, the usual melancholy, speculative apathy had again come over him. "Probably," he thought, looking at his fiancée and at Signora Ginami, "probably it wouldn't make much impression on them . . . Normal people have thick skins"; and he realized that he was envying the two women for their "thick skins."

All of a sudden he said, "I've got to go and see my father today."

"Are you going with your mother?"

"Yes."

The spaghetti was finished; the little servant girl came in again, changed the plates and put down a dish filled with meat and vegetables on the table. As soon as she had left the room, Giulia's mother took up the letter again and, examining it, said, "I should just like to know who wrote that letter."

"Mummy," said Giulia all at once, with a sudden, excessive seriousness, "give me that letter a minute."

She took the envelope, looked at it carefully, then extracted the thin sheet of paper, scrutinized it, frowning, and finally exclaimed in a loud, indignant voice, "I know perfectly well who wrote this letter . . . there can't be any doubt about it . . . Oh, what an infamous thing!"

"Who was it then?"

"An unfortunate wretch," replied Giulia, looking down at the table.

Marcello said nothing. Giulia worked as a secretary in a lawyer's office, and probably the letter had been written by one of the clerks there. "No doubt some envious person," said her mother. "Marcello, at thirty, has a position that many older men would like to have."

Although his curiosity was not aroused, Marcello asked his fiancée, as a matter of form, "If you know the name of the person who wrote the letter, why don't you tell us?"

"I can't," she answered, more thoughtful, now, than indignant. "But I've told you, he's an unfortunate wretch." She gave the letter back to her mother and helped herself from the dish that the maid handed to her.

For a moment none of the three spoke. Then Giulia's mother began again, in a tone of sincere incredulity, "And yet I can't believe that there can be anyone so bad as to be able to write such a letter about a man like Marcello."

"Not everybody loves him as we do, Mummy," said Giulia.

"But who," her mother burst out with great emphasis, "who could help loving our dear Marcello?"

"You know what Mummy says about you?" asked Giulia, who seemed now to have returned to her usual gaiety and volubility, "—that you're not a man but an angel . . . And so I suppose one of these days, instead of coming into the house by the door, you'll fly in by the window. She suppressed a burst of laughter and went on: "It'll be a great pleasure to the priest when you go to confession, to know that you're an angel . . . It isn't every day that he listens to the confession of an angel."

"Now you're making fun of me, as usual," said her mother; "but I'm not exaggerating in the least . . . For me, Marcello is an angel." She looked at Marcello with intense and sugary tenderness, and her eyes began to fill with tears. She added, after a moment, "In all my life I've known only one man who was as good as Marcello—and that was your father, Giulia."

Giulia now put on a serious look, as though to devote herself to the subject, and looked down at her plate. Her mother's face was undergoing a gradual transformation: an abundance of tears overflowed from her eyes, and her pathetic grimace distorted the soft, puffy features.

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stray locks of her loosened hair, so that colors and ornaments appeared confused and dimmed, as though seen through a sheet of glass streaming with water. Hurdly she searched for her handkerchief, and holding it to her eyes, stammered: "A truly good man . . . truly an angel . . . and we were so happy together, we three . . . and now he's dead he's not here any more. . . . Marcello reminds me of your father, with his goodness, and that's why I'm so very fond of him. . . . When I think of that man who was so good is dead, my heart breaks." Her last words were lost in the handkerchief.

Giulia said calmly, "Have something to eat, Mummy." "No, no, I'm not hungry," sobbed her mother. "You must forgive me, you two. . . . You're happy, and happiness must not be spoiled by the sorrow of an old woman." She rose hastily and went out of the room.

"Just think, it's six years ago," said Giulia, looking at the door, "and yet it's still just as if it was the first day." Marcello said nothing. He had lit a cigarette and was smoking with bent head. Giulia put out her hand and took his. "What are you thinking about?" she asked, almost beseechingly.

Giulia often asked him what he was thinking about, for he was often filled with curiosity and even alarm by the serious, reserved expression on his face. Marcello answered, "I was thinking about your mother. . . . Her compliments embarrass me. . . . She doesn't know me well enough to say that I'm good."

Giulia squeezed his hand and replied, "She doesn't say just as a compliment. . . . Even when you're not here, she often says to me, 'How good Marcello is!'"

"But what does *she* know about it?"

"There are some things that can be seen." Giulia rose and stood beside him, pressing her rounded hip against his shoulder and passing her hand through his hair. "But why? Don't you want people to think you're good?"

"I don't mean that," answered Marcello. "I mean that it may not be true."

She shook her head. "Your trouble is that you're too modest. . . . Now listen—I'm not like Mummy who tries to make out that everyone is good. . . . For me there are

good people and bad people. . . . Well, to me, you're one of the best people I've ever met in my life . . . and don't say that because we're engaged and because I love you . . . I say it because it's true."

"But what, exactly, does this goodness consist in?"

"I've told you. There are some things that can be seen . . . Why does one say that a woman is beautiful? . . . Because one *sees* that she is . . . and one sees that you are good."

"Well, so be it," said Marcello, with bowed head. The conviction of the two women that he was good was new to him, but he always found it profoundly disconcerting. In what did this goodness consist? Was he truly good? Was it not rather that the thing which Giulia and her mother called goodness was really his abnormality, in fact his detachment, his remoteness from ordinary life? Normal men were not good, he went on to think, for normality must always be paid for, whether consciously or not, at a high price, with various sorts of complicity—a negative kind—insensibility, stupidity, cowardice if not actual criminality. He was interrupted in these reflections by the voice of Giulia, saying, "By the way, d'you know my dress has come? I want to show it to you . . . Wait here a minute."

She rushed out of the room and Marcello rose from the table, went over to the window and threw it wide open. The window looked out over the street, or rather, since it was the top-floor flat, over the jutting parapet of the building, below which one could see nothing. But beyond this emptiness lay the full extent of the attic floor of the building opposite—a row of windows with shutters open through which the occupants of the room could be seen. It was a flat very similar to Giulia's: a bedroom, with the beds still unmade; a "good" drawing room with the usual sham, dark-colored furniture; a dining room at whose table three people, two men and a woman, could be seen sitting. These rooms opposite were very near because the street was not wide, and Marcello could distinguish the three people at the dining room table extremely clearly—a thickset, elderly man with a great mane of white hair, a younger man, thin, brown, and a blonde woman

other wedding dress, but Marcello was glad that Giulia should be pleased with this perfectly ordinary dress in exactly the same way in which millions and millions of other women before her had been pleased. The rounded exuberant curves of Giulia's figure were moulded with clumsy obviousness by the glossy white silk. All at once she came up to Marcello, and dropping the veil and holding up her face toward him, said, "Now give me a kiss . . . but don't touch me, or my dress will get crumpled." At that moment Giulia turned her back to the window and Marcello faced her. As he bent down to touch her lips with his he looked across into the dining room of the flat opposite and saw the white-haired man rise from the table and leave the room. Immediately afterward, the other two, the thin, brown young man and the blonde woman, also rose, almost automatically, and as they stood there they kissed each other. This sight pleased him, for after all he was behaving just like those two people from whom, only a short time before, he had felt himself to be divided by a wholly insuperable gulf. At the same moment Giulia exclaimed impatiently, "Never mind, my dress can go to the devil," and without letting go of Marcello, half closed the shutters with her other hand. Then, pressing her whole body against him, she threw her arms around his neck. They kissed in the darkness, hampered by the veil, and once again, as his fiancée clung tightly to him and wriggled and sighed and kissed him, it struck Marcello that she was acting in all innocence, unconscious of any contradiction between this embrace and her bridal costume; and this was yet another proof that it was permissible for normal people to take the utmost liberties with normality itself. At last they separated, breathless, and Giulia whispered, "We mustn't be impatient . . . just a few days more and then you'll be able to kiss me even in the street."

"I must go," he said, wiping his mouth with his handkerchief.

"I'll come with you."

They felt their way out of the dining room and into the hall. "We'll see each other this evening, after dinner," Giulia said. Tenderly, lovingly she gazed at him, leaning

against the doorpost. The veil, displaced by the kiss, hung untidily on one side. Marcello went up to her and straightened it, saying, "That's all right now." At that moment there was a hum of voices on the landing of the floor below. Giulia, bashful, drew back, threw him a kiss with the tips of her fingers and hurriedly shut the door.

CHAPTER 6

THE idea of confession did not please Marcello. He was not religious in the sense of formally practicing the prescribed rites; nor was he very sure that he had any natural inclination toward religious feeling; yet he would have been quite willing to look upon the confession demanded by Father Lattanzi as one of the many conventional acts upon which he was embarking with a view to establishing himself, once and for all, as a normal person, had it not been that this matter of confession involved the revelation of two things which for different reasons he felt it quite impossible to confess—the tragedy of his childhood and his mission to Paris. An obscure instinct told him that there was a subtle connection between these two things; and yet it would have been very difficult for him to say clearly what this connection was. Furthermore, he was quite aware that, among the many possible standards of behavior, he had not chosen the Christian standard that forbids man to kill, but another, entirely different one, political and of recent introduction, that had no objection to bloodshed. In Christianity, in fact, as represented by the Church with its hundreds of dignitaries, its innumerable churches, its saints and its martyrs, he did not recognize the power that was needed to bring him back into that communion with other men from which he had been debarred by the Lino affair—that power which he felt to be implicit in the plump Minister with the lipstick-stained mouth, in the cynical secretary, and in all his superiors in the Secret Service. Marcello was conscious of all this by some obscure intuition rather than by

any process of thought, and his melancholy, was increased by it for he was like a man who, all other ways being closed, sees but one way out, and that a distasteful one.

But he must make up his mind, he thought as he jumped on the streetcar going toward Santa Maria Maggiore, he must choose between making a complete confession, according to the rules of the Church, or confining himself to a partial, purely formal confession, simply to please Giulia. Although he was neither a practicing nor a believing Christian, he inclined to the first of these alternatives; hoping, almost, by means of his confession, if not to alter his destiny, at least to attach himself firmly to it by yet another tie. As the trolley moved through the streets he debated the problem with his usual rather dull, pedantic seriousness. As far as Lino was concerned, he felt more or less easy. He would be able to tell the story as it had really happened, and the priest, after the usual examination and the usual recommendations, could not but give him absolution. But with regard to the confession which, as he well knew, involved fraud, ~~treachery~~, and, in its last stage, possibly the death of a man, he realized that this was an entirely different matter. The point, in this case, was not so much to obtain approval of it as the mere fact of talking about it. He was not at all sure that he was capable of it; for to speak of it would mean abandoning one standard for another; submitting to Christian judgment something that he had himself considered to be entirely unrelated to it; betraying his implicit obligation of secrecy and silence; in fact, ~~risking~~ the whole carefully built-up edifice of his absorption in normality. All the same, he thought it was worthwhile making the attempt, if only in order to convince himself yet again, by this final certificate of official approbation of the edifice' solidity.

He was aware that he was considering these alternatives without excessive emotion, in a cool, impassive spirit like that of a detached spectator, just as if he had made his choice already and all that had to happen in the future was discounted in advance, though he could not know how or when. He was so little troubled by doubt that when he entered the vast church, filled with a com-

forting shade and silence and coolness after the glare and noise and heat of the street, he went so far as to forget his confession. He started to wander about over its deserted flagstones, from one aisle to another, like an idle tourist. He had always found churches pleasing to him as safe points in a fluctuating world, constructions by no means casual in which the things that he himself was seeking—order, a standard, a rule of life—had found, in other days, their massive and splendid expression. Very often he would go into a church—numerous as they are in Rome—and sit down on a bench, without praying, in the contemplation of something that might have fitted his own case if only conditions had been different. The thing that attracted him in churches was not the solutions that they offered and that it was impossible for him to accept, but rather a final result he could not but appreciate and admire. He liked all churches; but the more imposing they were, the more magnificent, the more profane, the more he liked them. In such churches, in which religion had evaporated and become a majestic, ordered worldliness, he seemed to recognize the point of transition from a primitive religious belief to a now adult society which nevertheless, without that far off belief, could not have existed.

At this hour the church was deserted. Marcello went right up beneath the altar, and then, moving close to one of the pillars of the right hand aisle, looked down the full length of the floor, seeking to reduce his own stature to nothing and to drop his eye to ground level. How vast the floor looked, seen thus in perspective, as an ant might see it! It seemed like a great plain and made one almost giddy. Then he looked up, and his eye, following the feeble glimmer cast by the dim light upon the rounded surfaces of the immense marble shafts, rebounded from pillar to pillar all the way down to the door where he had entered.

At that moment someone came in, lifting the heavy curtain and letting in a segment of crude white light. How small the figure in the doorway looked, far away at the other end of the church! Marcello went round behind the altar and looked at the mosaics in the apse. The figure of

Christ, surrounded by four saints, arrested his attention; whoever had painted Him in that way, he thought, certainly had no doubts about what was normal and what was abnormal. He bent his head as he made his way slowly towards the confessional in the right-hand aisle. He was thinking now that it was useless to regret not having been born in other times and other conditions. He was what he was precisely because the times and conditions in which he was living were no longer the same as those that had permitted the erection of this church; and his whole moral obligation lay in the conscious recognition of this reality.

He went up to the confessional, which, made all of dark carved wood, was proportionate in size to the huge basilica, and was in time to catch a glimpse of the priest sitting inside it as he drew the curtain across and hid himself; but he did not see his face. With a habitual gesture, as he knelt down, he pulled up his trousers at the knee so that they should not get crumpled; then he said in a low voice, "I want to make my confession."

From the other side came the priest's voice, answering, in a subdued but frank, brisk tone, that he might begin at once. The voice was full and rhythmical, a deep bass, the voice of a mature man with a strong Southern accent. In spite of himself Marcello could not help conjuring up a monkish figure with a face all smothered in black beard, with thick eyebrows, a massive nose, ears and nostrils full of hairs. A man, he felt, made of the same heavy, massive material as the confessional itself, a man without suspicions, without subtleties. The priest, as he had foreseen, asked him how long it was since he had confessed, and he answered that he had never confessed except during his childhood and that he was doing it now because he was intending to get married. After a moment's silence the priest's voice on the other side of the grating said, in a somewhat indifferent tone. "You have done very wrong, my son. . . . And how old are you?"

"Thirty," said Marcello.

"You have lived for thirty years in sin," said the priest, in the tone of an accountant announcing the amount of an overdraft. He resumed after a moment's pause, "For

thirty years you have lived like an animal, not like a human being."

Marcello bit his lip. The confessor's authority, as expressed in this brisk, familiar manner of judging his case before he even knew its details, was obnoxious and irritating to him. Not that the priest—probably a good man who performed his office scrupulously—displeased him, nor the place, nor the rite itself; but in contrast to the Ministry, where everything had displeased him but where authority had seemed to him obvious and unquestionable, here he felt an instinctive desire to rebel. He said, however, with an effort, "I have committed every sin . . . even the worst."

"Every sin?"

Now I'm going to say I killed a man, he thought, and I want to see what effect it will have upon me. He hesitated, and then, exerting himself, succeeded in pronouncing in a clear, firm voice, "Yes, every sin; I've even killed a man."

The priest immediately exclaimed in a lively manner but without either indignation or surprise, "You killed a man and yet you did not feel the need to confess."

Marcello reflected that that was exactly the right thing for the priest to have said: no horror, no surprise, merely an official reproof for not having confessed so grave a sin at the proper time. And he was grateful to the priest, just as he would have been grateful to a police inspector who, faced with the same confession, had placed him, without comment and without delay, under arrest. Everyone had to act his part, and only in that way could the world endure. In the meantime, however, he was conscious that in revealing his own tragedy he again experienced no particular feeling; and he was surprised at this indifference, which was in such strong contrast to his profound agitation of a short time before, when Giulia's mother had announced that she had had an anonymous letter. He said, in a calm voice, "I killed a man when I was thirteen . . . in self-defense . . . and almost without meaning to."

"Tell me how it happened."

He changed his position slightly as his knees were beginning to hurt him, and then began, "One morning

when I came out of school a man came up to me with some excuse . . . At that time I was longing to possess a revolver . . . not a toy one but a real revolver. . . I promised to give me a revolver and so succeeded in making me get into his car. . . He was some foreign lady's chauffeur and had the use of the car all day long because she was away, traveling abroad. . . I was completely ignorant at that time, and when he made certain proposals to me I didn't even understand what it was all about."

"What sort of proposals?"

"Sexual proposals," said Marcello soberly. "I didn't know what sexual love was, either normal or abnormal. I got into the car, then, and he took me to his employer's villa."

"And what happened there?"

"Nothing, or practically nothing. . . First of all he made one or two attempts, then he was sorry and made me promise that from then on I wouldn't pay any attention to him, even if he invited me again to get into the car."

"What d'you mean by 'practically nothing'? Did he kiss you?"

"No," said Marcello, slightly surprised, "he only put his arm round my waist, for a moment, in the passage."

"Go on."

"He had foreseen, however, that he would not be able to forget me. . . And the next day he was again waiting for me when I came out of school. . . This time he again told me that he would give me the revolver, and I, longing to possess it, at first hung back a little and then agreed to get into the car."

"Where did you go?"

"As before, to the villa, to his own room. . ."

"And this time, how did he behave?"

"He was quite different," said Marcello; "he seemed quite beside himself. . . He said he wouldn't give me the revolver and that, one way or another, I had to do what he wanted. . . As he said this he was holding the revolver in his hand. . . Then he took hold of my arm and threw me down on the bed, making me hit my head against the wall. . . The revolver meanwhile had fallen on to the bed and he was kneeling in front of me with his arm

round my legs. . . I seized the revolver, jumped up from the bed and took a few steps backward, and then, throwing out his arms, he shouted, 'Kill me, kill me like a dog. . . .' Then I—just as if I was obeying him—fired, and he fell back on the bed. . . And I ran away and knew nothing more about it. . . All this happened many years ago. . . Recently I went and looked up the newspapers of that time and found out that the man died that same evening, in hospital."

Marcello had told his tale without hurrying, choosing his words with care and pronouncing them with precision. He was aware, while he was speaking, that as usual he felt nothing—nothing except that cold, remote sadness that was customary with him whatever he said or did. The priest, without commenting in any way on the story, asked at once, "Are you sure you have told the whole truth?"

"Yes, I'm certain," replied Marcello, surprised.

"You know," went on the priest, suddenly arousing himself, "you know that if you keep back or distort the truth or part of it, your confession is not valid, and besides, you commit a grave sacrilege. . . What really happened between you and that man, the second time?"

"But . . . just what I've told you."

"Was there no carnal relation between you? . . . Did he not use violence?"

So murder, Marcello could not help thinking, was less important than the sin of sodomy. He confirmed what he had said, "There was nothing except what I've told you."

"It would appear," continued the priest inflexibly, "that you killed the man to avenge yourself for something that he had done to you. . ."

"He had done absolutely nothing to me."

There was a brief silence, filled, it seemed to him, with ill-disguised incredulity. "And since then," asked the priest all of a sudden, in an entirely unexpected manner, "have you ever had relations with men?"

"No . . . my sexual life has been, and still is, perfectly normal."

"What do you mean by 'normal' sexual life?"

"In that respect I am a man just like any other man. . . The first time I had a woman was in a brothel, at the age

of seventeen . . . and since then I have never had relations except with women."

"And that's what you call a normal sexual life?"

"Yes, why not?"

"But that too is abnormal," said the priest triumphantly; "that too is sin. . . Has nobody ever told you, my child?—the normal thing is to marry and have relations with your own wife with the object of bringing children into the world."

"That's just what I'm on the point of doing," said Marcello.

"Good, good, but it's not enough. . . You can't touch the altar with bloodstained hands."

At last we're coming to it, Marcello could not think, for he had almost believed, for a moment, the priest had forgotten the main object of his confession. He said, as humbly as he could, "Tell me what I must do."

"You must repent," said the priest; "only by a sincere and profound repentance can you expiate the evil you have done."

"I have already repented," said Marcello thoughtfully; "if repentance means a strong desire never to have done certain things, then I have indeed repented." He wanted to have liked to add: "but this repentance has not been enough . . . it could not be enough." However, he restrained himself.

The priest said hurriedly, "It is my duty to warn you that if what you tell me now is not true, my absolution has no value. . . You know what awaits you if you deceive me?"

"What?"

"Damnation."

The priest uttered this last word with a partial satisfaction. Marcello probed his imagination to see if this word recalled, and found nothing; not even the picture of the flames of hell. But at the same time he was aware that the word meant more than the priest intended it to mean. And an anxious shudder ran through him, as though he knew that this damnation, whether he repented or not, was in store for him, and that it

not in the priest's power to save him from it. "I have truly repented," he repeated bitterly.

"And you have nothing else to tell me?"

Marcello was silent for a moment before replying. He realized now that the time had come for him to speak of his mission, which, he knew, would involve actions liable to be condemned—in fact already condemned beforehand—by the rules of Christianity. He had foreseen this moment and had rightly ascribed the greatest importance to his own ability to reveal the mission. And then, with a quiet, melancholy feeling of a discovery that he had expected, he found himself, almost at the moment when he was opening his mouth to speak, held back by an insuperable repugnance. It was not a moral disgust, nor was it shame, nor indeed any sense of guilt; it was something utterly different which had nothing to do with guilt. It was, so to speak, an overruling inhibition, dictated by a profound complicity and loyalty. He *ought not* to speak about his mission, that was all, and this was intimated to him in an authoritative manner by that same conscience which had remained dumb and inert at the moment when he announced to the priest, "I have killed a man." Not entirely convinced, he tried once again to speak, but again he was conscious of that same repugnance halting his tongue and obstructing his utterance, in the automatic manner in which a lock springs open when the key is turned. Once again, therefore, and with even stronger proof, he had confirmation of the power of authority as represented at the Ministry by the contemptible Minister and his no less contemptible secretary. It was, like all other kinds of authority, a mysterious thing which, so it seemed, sank its roots down into the deepest part of his spirit, whereas the Church, apparently so much more authoritative, went no deeper than the surface. And so, for the first time being deceitful he said, "Ought I to tell my fiancée, before we get married, what I've told you today?"

"Have you never said anything about it to her?"

"No, it would be the first time."

"I don't see any necessity for it," said the priest; "you

would upset her to no purpose . . . and you would be endangering your family's peace of mind."

"Yes, you're right," said Marcello.

Another silence ensued. Then the priest said, in a conciliatory tone, as though he were putting his last and final question: "Tell me, my son, have you ever been a member, or are you a member now, of any subversive group or society?"

Marcello, who had not expected this question, was disconcerted and, for a moment, silenced. Clearly, he thought, the priest was putting this question by order of his superiors, in order to ascertain the political leaning of his flock. Yet it was significant that he should ask it of himself, who approached the rites of the Church as a matter of form, considering them as ceremonies unrelated to the society of which he desired to be a member, was a point of fact being asked by the priest not to put himself in opposition to that society. This was his request, rather than that he should not put himself in opposition to *himself*. He would have liked to reply: "No, I am a member of a group that hunts down subversive elements." But he resisted this malicious temptation and simply said, "To tell the truth, I am a government official."

This answer evidently pleased the priest, for, after a short pause, he quietly resumed, "Now you must promise me that you will pray. . . And I don't mean that you must pray just for a few days, or a few months . . . or even a few years . . . but all the rest of your life. . . You must pray for your own soul and for the soul of that man. . . and you must make your wife pray too, and your children, if you have any. . . Prayer is the only thing that can draw God's attention to you and obtain His pity for you. . . Do you understand? . . . And now concentrate your thoughts and pray with me."

Marcello automatically bowed his head and listened through the grating to the subdued, hurrying voice of the priest as he recited a prayer in Latin. And then the priest in a louder voice and still in Latin, pronounced the formula of absolution; and Marcello rose from the confessional.

But, as he passed across in front of it, the curtain was drawn aside and the priest beckoned to him to stop. He

saw with surprise that he was just as he had pictured him—rather fat, bald, with a big rounded forehead, thick eyebrows, round brown eyes that were serious but not intelligent, a full-lipped mouth. A country priest, he thought, a mendicant friar. The priest, in the meantime, was holding out toward him, in silence, a little booklet with a colored picture on its cover—the *Life of Saint Ignatius of Loyola* in an edition for young Catholics. "Thank you," said Marcello, examining the little book. The priest made another gesture as though to say that there was no need to thank him, and drew the curtain again. Marcello walked away to the entrance door.

Just as he was on the point of going out, however, he cast a glance round the church, with its two rows of pillars, its coffered ceiling, its deserted floor, its great altar, and it seemed to him that he was saying farewell forever to an ancient survival of a world such as he longed for and such as he knew could never exist again. It was a kind of mirage in reverse, based upon an irrevocable past from which his steps carried him further and further away. Then he lifted the heavy curtain and went out into the strong light of a clear sky, into the square with its metallic clanging of streetcars and its vulgar background of nondescript buildings and shops.

CHAPTER 7

WHEN Marcello got out of the bus in the quarter where his mother lived he became conscious, almost immediately, that he was being followed at some distance by a man. As he walked in a leisurely way down the deserted street, past the walls of gardens, he took a quick look at him. He was a man of middling height, rather stout, with a square face whose expression was honest and good-natured but not without a certain sly cunning such as is often to be seen on the faces of peasants. He was wearing a thin suit that had faded to a color between brown and

"Come along, then," said Marcello, walking off without more ado toward the gate of his mother's villa. He took a key from his pocket, opened the gate and invited the man to come in. He obeyed, respectfully removing his hat and displaying a perfectly round head with sparse black hair and, at the crown, a white circular bald patch that looked exactly like a tonsure. Marcello walked in front of him down the path, making for the far end of the garden where he knew there was a pergola with a table and two iron chairs. As we went, he could not help noticing once again the neglected, overgrown look of the garden. The clean white gravel on which, as a child, he had loved to run up and down had disappeared years ago, buried under soil or scattered abroad. The outline of the path, swallowed up in rough grass, could be traced chiefly by the remains of two small myrtle hedges, uneven now, and with gaps in them, but still recognizable. The flower beds running beside the hedges were also smothered in exuberant weeds; the rose trees and other flowering plants were entangled with bristling shrubs and briars in inextricable confusion. Here and there, too, in the shade of the trees, were piles of rubbish, disintegrated packing cases, broken bottles and all sorts of similar objects which are generally consigned to attics. He averted his eyes in disgust from this sight, asking himself, as he had often done before, with a mixture of surprise and discouragement, "Why on earth can't they tidy up? So little is needed . . . Why it it?" Further on, the path ran between the wall of the villa and the garden wall, that same ivy-covered wall over which, as a child, he had been accustomed to hold communication with his neighbor Roberto. He led the Secret Service agent into the pergola and sat down on the iron chair, inviting him to do the same. But he remained respectfully standing. "There's not very much to tell, sir," he said hastily. "I am entrusted by the Colonel to inform you that you are to stop, on your way to Paris, at S." and he named a town not far from the frontier—"and to go and ask for Signor Gabrio, at 3 Via dei Glicini."

"A change of program," thought Marcello. It was characteristic of the Secret Service, as he knew, deliberately

and at the last moment to make changes of plan, with the object of distributing responsibility and covering up traces. "Where is it I'm to go in Via dei Glicini?" he could not help asking, "is it a private apartment?"

"Well, actually no, Doctor," said the Secret Service man with a broad smile, half knowing and half embarrassed; "it's a bawdy house. . . The proprietress is called Enrichetta Parodi. . . But you must ask for Signor Gabrio. . . The house, like all these places, is open till midnight. . . But it would really be better, sir, if you went early in the morning, when there's nobody there. . . I shall be there too." He was silent for a moment. Then, unable to interpret the complete lack of expression on Marcello's face, he added in embarrassment: "That's just for the sake of security, sir."

Marcello, without saying a word, raised his eyes and considered him for a moment. It was his duty to dismiss him now, but, for some reason unknown to himself—perhaps because of the honest, homely expression on the square, broad face—he wanted to add a word or two, of an unofficial kind, to show that he felt friendly toward him. Finally he asked, at random, "How long have you been in the Service, Orlando?"

"Since 1925, sir."

"And in Italy all the time?"

"Scarcely at all, sir," answered the Secret Service man with a sigh, evidently anxious for a confidential talk; "oh, sir, if I could tell you what my life has been like since then, and what I've been through! . . . Always on the move—Turkey, France, Germany, Kenya, Tunisia . . . never still for an instant." He paused for a moment, gazing fixedly at Marcello; then with rhetorical yet sincere solemnity, he added, "And all for Family and Fatherland, sir."

Marcello again looked up at him as he stood there, hands in hand, almost at attention; then, with a gesture of dismissal, said: "All right then, Orlando. . . Tell the Colonel I'll stop at S., as he wishes."

"Yes, sir." He saluted and walked away past the wall of the villa.

Left alone, Marcello sat staring into emptiness. It was

hot underneath the pergola, and the sun, filtering through the leaves and branches of the Virginia creeper, scorched his face with discs of dazzling light. The painted iron table, that once had been spotless, was now a dirty white, with black and rusty stains where the paint had flaked off. As he looked out from the pergola he could see the part of the garden wall where the opening in the ivy had been, through which he had been accustomed to communicate with Roberto. The ivy was still there, and it might still have been possible to look through into the next-door garden; but Roberto's family no longer lived there, and the villa was now occupied by a dentist who received his clients in his own home. Suddenly a lizard ran down the stem of the Virginia creeper and came fearlessly forward on to the table. It was a big lizard of the most common type, with a green back and a white belly that throbbed against the yellowish paint of the table. Rapidly, with little darting steps, it came quite close to Marcello and then stopped dead, its sharp head raised in his direction, its little black eyes staring in front of it. He looked at it with affection, and did not move for fear of frightening it. He remembered the time when as a boy he had slaughtered the lizards and then, to rid himself of his remorse, had in vain sought to involve the timid Roberto as his partner and ally. At the time he had not succeeded in finding anybody to lighten the burden of his guilt. He had been left to face the death of the lizards alone; and in that loneliness he had recognized the evidence of his crime. But now, he thought, he was not, he never again would be, alone. Even if he committed a crime—provided he committed it for certain ends—he would have the State at his back, as well as its dependent political, social and military organizations, great masses of people who thought as he did, and, outside Italy, other states, other millions of people. What he was going to do, he reflected, was a worse thing than killing a few lizards; and yet there were so many people on his side, beginning with the honest Secret Service man Orlando, a married man and the father of five children. "For Family and Fatherland"; that phrase, so ingenuous in spite of its solemnity, was like a fine, bright-colored banner flying in a joyful breeze

on a sunny day while trumpets sound and soldiers march and it echoed in his ears, inspiring yet sad, mingling hope with melancholy. "For Family and Fatherland," he thought, "that's enough for Orlando . . . why can't it be enough for me too?"

As he sat there, he heard the sound of a car from the direction of the entrance gate, and at once rose with brusque movement that scared the lizard away. Without hurrying, he left the pergola and walked toward the gate. An old, black motorcar was standing in the avenue, not far from the still open gate. The chauffeur, in a white livery with blue facings, was just closing it, but when he saw Marcello he stopped and raised his cap.

"Alberi," said Marcello in his quietest voice, "we're going to the clinic today, so there's no need to put the car in the garage."

"Very good, Signor Marcello," replied the chauffeur. Marcello glanced at him sideways. Alberi was a young man with an olive complexion and coal-black eyes with whites like glossy white china. He had very regular features, close-set white teeth, carefully oiled black hair. He was not tall, yet he gave the effect of being built on a large scale, perhaps because of the smallness of his hands and feet. He was of the same age as Marcello, but appeared older, owing, possibly, to a kind of Oriental sensuality that insinuated itself into each of his features and looked as though, with time, it would inevitably turn to lumpiness. As he was closing the gate Marcello looked at him again, with aversion, then he walked away toward the house.

He opened the french window and went into the drawing room, that was almost in darkness. He was immediately struck by the musty, unwholesome smell hanging in the air, comparatively slight in contrast to that of the other rooms where his mother's ten Pekinese dogs roamed freely, but all the more noticeable here where they scarcely ever penetrated. When he opened the window a little light came into the room and for a moment he saw the furniture in its gray dust covers, the rolled-up carpets standing upright in the corners, the piano muffled in sheets pinned together. He went through the drawing

room and dining room and out into the hall and then started up the stairs. Half way up, on a bare marble step (the carpet, worn out, had vanished long since and never been replaced) lay a piece of dog's excrement, and he made a detour so as not to step in it. When he reached the landing he went straight to the door of his mother's room and opened it. He had barely had time to do so before all ten Pekinese, like a long-contained flood of water that suddenly overflows, surged out between his legs and rushed, barking, all over the landing and staircase. Hesitating in the doorway, he watched them irritably as they ran away, with their elegant, feathery tails and their sulky, almost catlike muzzles. Then, from the gloomy half-darkness of the room, came his mother's voice, "Is that you, Marcello?"

"Yes, Mother, it's me. . . But what about these dogs?"

"Let them go . . . poor little angels . . . they've been shut up all the morning . . . yes, yes . . . you can let them go."

Marcello frowned ill-humoredly and went into the room. The air there seemed to him quite unbreathable: the windows had been shut since the night before and a close, stuffy smell, mingled with the smell of dogs and of perfume, hung everywhere; and the heat of the sun on the outside of the shutters seemed to make all these smells ferment and turn sour. Stiffly, watchfully, as if he feared by moving to dirty himself or to become impregnated with these unpleasant odors, he went over to the bed and sat down on the edge of it, his hands resting on his knees.

As his eyes became gradually accustomed to the semi-darkness, he could see the whole room. Underneath the window, in the diffused light which penetrated through the long curtains, soiled and yellow with age—that looked to him as though they were made of the same flimsy material as the many intimate garments scattered about the room—stood a long row of aluminum plates containing the dogs' food. The floor was littered with slippers and stockings. Near the bathroom door, in an almost dark corner, he caught a glimpse of a pink dressing gown hanging over a chair, just as it had been thrown there the evening before, half on the ground and with one sleeve

dangling. From its survey of the room his cold, disgusted glance traveled to the bed upon which his mother lay. As usual she had not thought to cover herself when he came in, and was half naked. Lying back against the head of the bed with its worn and dingy blue silk upholstery, her hands clasped behind her head, she stared at him in silence. Beneath the mass of her hair, divided into two puffed-out, brown wings, her face showed pale and thin, almost triangular, dominated by the eyes that looked large and cadaverously dark in the dim light.

She was wearing a greenish transparent undergarment reaching barely to the top of her thighs; and once again he was forced to think of her, not as the middle-aged woman she really was, but as an elderly, dried-up little girl. The ribs in her fleshless chest stood out like a rack made of small, sharp bones; and her sunken breasts were visible through the transparent material as two round, dark patches of perfect flatness. But it was above all her thighs that aroused a feeling of disgust and of pity in Marcello: thin and puny, they were just like those of a little girl of twelve who has not yet started to develop womanly shape. His mother's age betrayed itself by marks in her wasted skin and by the color, a frigid, sickly whiteness with mysterious bluish or livid patches. "Bruises," he thought, "or bites, from Alberi." But below the knees her legs still looked perfect, as did her very small feet with their close-set toes. Marcello would have preferred not to let his mother see his ill-humor; but once again he could not restrain himself. "How many times have I asked you not to receive me like that—almost naked?" he said suddenly, and without looking at her.

Impatiently, but without rancor, she replied: "What a very strict son I've got!"—and drew a corner of the sheet over herself. Her voice was hoarse; and this, too, displeased Marcello. He recalled how, when he was a child, it had been sweet and clear as a song; this hoarseness was the result of drink and other forms of excess. After a moment he said, "Well, we're going to the clinic to-day."

"Very well, we'll go," said his mother, pulling herself up and groping for something behind the head of the bed.

bed; "though I feel dreadfully ill and though our going to see him makes no difference, one way or another, to him, poor man."

"Still, he's your husband and my father," said Marcello, staring at the floor with his head between his hands.

"Yes, of course he is," she said. She had now retrieved the electric cord and pressed the switch. This turned on the dim lamp on the bedside table that looked to Marcello as if it were wrapped around with a pair of women's drawers. "And yet," she went on, rising from the bed and putting her feet to the ground, "to tell you the truth, sometimes I wish he would die. . . He himself wouldn't even know it . . . and I wouldn't have to go on paying all that money for the clinic. . . I've so little. . . Just think," she added in a suddenly mournful tone, "just think, I may have to give up the car."

"Well, really, would that matter?"

"It would matter very much," she said with childish resentment and shamelessness. "As it is, with the car, I have an excuse for keeping Alberi and seeing him whenever I want to. . . If I give it up, I shan't have that excuse any more."

"My dear Mother, don't talk to me about your lovers," and Marcello calmly, digging the nails of one hand into the palm of the other.

"My lovers! . . . He's the only one I've got. . . . If you talk to me about that silly hen of a girl you're going to marry, I've a perfect right to talk about him, poor dear; he's far more attractive and intelligent than she is."

Curiously, these insults to his fiancée uttered by his mother, who could not bear Giulia, did not offend Marcello. Perhaps it's true, he said to himself, perhaps she really is rather like a hen . . . but I like her to be like that. In a softened tone, he said, "Well then, are you going to get dressed? If we're going to the clinic, it's time we went."

"All right, just a moment." Moving lightly, almost like a shadow, she crossed the room on tiptoe, picking up the pink dressing gown from the chair as she passed and throwing it over her shoulders. Then she opened the bathroom door and vanished.

As soon as his mother had gone out, Marcello went over to the window and opened it wide. The air outside was hot and still, but he felt an acute sense of relief, as though he were looking out onto a glacier instead of a stuffy garden. At the same time he seemed almost to be aware of a movement of the air in the room behind him; heavy with stale perfumes and with the stink of animals, it seemed to stir gradually, to pass slowly out through the window and then dissolve into space, like a huge aerial vomit overflowing from the throat of the polluted house. He stood there for some time, looking down at the thick foliage of the wistaria whose branches encircled the window, then turned back into the room. The disorder and the air of neglect struck him afresh, but this time they aroused in him more sadness than disgust.

In a flash he remembered his mother as she had been in her youth; and he had a strong and sickening feeling of consternation and rebellion at the decadence and corruption that had changed her from the girl she had been into the woman she was now. There was certainly something both incomprehensible and irreparable at the bottom of this transformation. It was neither age, nor passions, nor financial ruin, nor feeble intelligence, nor any other precise cause. It was something that he felt without being able to explain it, something that seemed to him to be an essential part of her life, in fact to have once constituted its chief merit, but that had since become by some mysterious transmutation, its mortal bane. He left the window and went over to the chest-of-drawers, on which, among a mass of rubbish, stood a photograph of his mother as a young woman. As he looked at the delicate face, at the innocent eyes, at the pretty mouth, he asked himself in horror why she was no longer as she had been then. As he asked himself that question there arose on the surface of his mind the feeling of repugnance and for any form of corruption or decadence, which was now rendered even more intolerable by a sense of filial remorse and horror. Perhaps it was as if his mother had been reduced to the same level as the things he had loved her more or in a different way. He had gone to sleep in this repulsive

He felt his eyes fill with tears at this thought, so that the portrait became dim and misty, and he shook his head vigorously. At the same moment the bathroom door opened and his mother appeared on the threshold in her dressing gown. She quickly covered her eyes with her arm, exclaiming, "Shut that window . . . shut it at once. . . How can you bear that bright light?"

Marcello hastily lowered the shutter, then he moved close to his mother, and taking her by the arm, made her sit down beside him on the edge of the bed and asked her gently, "And you Mother, how can you bear this disorder?"

She looked at him, hesitating, embarrassed. "I don't know how it happens," she said, "Every time I use something I ought to put it back in its place . . . but, somehow or other, I never manage to remember."

"Mother," said Marcello, all of a sudden, "every age has its own kind of dignity. . . Why, Mother, why have you let yourself go in this way?"

He was pressing her hand; and she, with the other hand, was holding up a hanger from which dangled a dress. For one moment he thought he detected a sign of genuine grief in those huge, childishly distressed eyes, and his mother's lips trembled slightly. Then an expression of annoyance chased away all other emotions. She exclaimed, "Everything that I am, everything that I do, displeases you, I know that. . . You can't bear my dogs, or my clothes, or my habits. . . But I'm young still, my dear boy, and I want to enjoy life in my own way. . . And now leave me alone," she concluded, snatching away her hand, "otherwise, how will I ever get dressed?"

Marcello said nothing. His mother went into a corner, slipped out of her dressing gown and dropped it on the floor, then opened the wardrobe and put on her dress in front of the looking glass on its door. When she was dressed the excessive thinness of her sharp hips, of her hollow shoulders and her fleshless bosom was even more clearly revealed. She looked at herself for a moment in the mirror, turning from side to side, while with one hand she arranged her hair; then, hopping this way and that,

she slipped her feet into two of the many shoes that scattered about the floor. "And now let's go," she said, taking up a bag from the chest-of-drawers and moving toward the door.

"Aren't you going to put on a hat?"

"Why should I? There's no need."

They started to go downstairs. "You haven't said a thing to me about your wedding," she said.

"I'm getting married the day after tomorrow."

"And where are you going for your honeymoon?"

"To Paris."

"The traditional honeymoon," she said. When she reached the hall she went to the kitchen door and called to the cook. "Matilde. . . Will you be so kind—call the dogs in before it gets dark."

They went out into the garden. Beyond the trees a car was standing, black and dingy, in the drive. "Well, then," she said, "it's decided that you don't want to come and live here with me? . . . Although I don't find you a wife attractive, I would have made even that sacrifice. . . . Besides, I've so much room."

"No, Mother," answered Marcello.

"You prefer to go to your mother-in-law's," she said lightly, "to that horrible flat: four rooms and a kitchen. She bent down as if to pick a blade of grass, but in doing so she stumbled and would have fallen had not Marcello quickly seized her arm and held her up. He felt beneath his fingers the soft, meager flesh of her arm that seemed to move around the bone like a rag tied round a stick, and again he was moved with pity for her. They got into the car, Alberi, cap in hand, holding open the door. Then Alberi took his place and drove the car out through the gate. Marcello took advantage of the moment when he got out again to shut the gate behind them to say to his mother, "I would be perfectly willing to come and live with you—if you sacked Alberi and tidied up your little flat a bit . . . and stopped those injections."

She looked at him sideways with uncomprehending eyes. But her thin, sharp nose was trembling slightly, and finally this trembling spread to her small, faded mouth.

in a pale, wry smile. "D'you know what the doctor says?" she asked. "That one of these days I might die from them."

"Why don't you stop them, then?"

"Will you tell me *why* I should stop them?"

Alberi got into the car again and put on his dark glasses. Marcello's mother leaned forward and put her hand on the chauffeur's shoulder. It was a thin, transparent hand with the skin stretched tight over the tendons and blotchy with red and bluish marks; and the scarlet of the nails was almost black. Marcello tried not to look, but could not help it. He saw her hand move along the man's shoulder until it tickled his ear in a light caress. Then she said: "Well, we're going to the clinic."

"Very good, madam," said Alberi, without turning his head.

She closed the dividing pane of glass and threw herself back on the cushions as the car moved gently away. As she fell back on the seat she looked obliquely at her son, and to the surprise of Marcello, who was not expecting such intuition on her part, she said, "You're angry because I gave Alberi a little caress, aren't you?"

As she spoke she looked at him with the childish, despairing, slightly twisted smile that was characteristic of her. Marcello tried, unsuccessfully, to alter the disgusted expression on his face. "I'm not angry," he answered. "But I'd rather not have seen."

Averting her head, she said: "You can't know what it means for a woman not to be young any more. . . It's worse than death."

Marcello was silent. The car was moving along silently now beneath the pepper trees, whose feathery branches rustled against the glass of the windows. After a moment she went on, "There are times when I wish I was old already. . . I shall be a thin, clean little old woman"—she smiled with pleasure, her attention already distracted by this vision of herself—"like a dried flower that's been kept between the pages of a book." She put her hand on Marcello's arm and asked him, "Wouldn't you like to have a little old woman like that for a mother—well seasoned

well preserved, as if she'd been put away in a casket?
lene?"

Marcello looked at her and answered with some sarcasm, "That's what you'll be like, some day." He became serious, and, looking up at him with a sad smile, said, "D'you really think so? . . . On the contrary, I'm convinced, myself, that you'll find me one morning, in that room you so detest."

"Why, Mother?" asked Marcello; but he realized his mother was speaking seriously and might even be right. "You're young and you must go on living. That doesn't prevent me from dying soon. Show it; they read it in my horoscope." Suddenly she took his hand, right under his eyes, adding without hesitation, "D'you like this ring?"

It was a heavy ring with an elaborate setting around a round stone of a milky color. "Yes," said Marcello, scarcely looking at it, "it's lovely."

"You know," went on his mother volubly, "sometimes I think you've inherited everything from your father. He was like you too, in the days when he still had his reason, and he couldn't do anything. . . Beautiful things meant nothing to him. . . The only thing he thought of was politics—like you."

This time, without knowing why, Marcello was unable to repress a strong feeling of irritation. "It seems to me," he said, "that my father and I have nothing at all in common. . . I'm a perfectly reasonable person, not like him, whereas he, even before he went to the clinic—from which I remember, and you've always confirmed it—was a . . . how shall I say? . . . rather excitable."

"Yes, but there is something in common between you and me. . . You neither of you get any fun out of life and you don't want other people to do so. . ." She looked out of the window for a moment and then added suddenly, "I shan't come to your wedding. . . But anyhow you mustn't be offended, because I don't go anywhere these days. . . But since, after all, you are my son, I thought to give you a present. . . What would you like?"

"Nothing, Mother," answered Marcello indifferently.

"What a pity!" said his mother ingenuously. "If I'd known you wanted nothing, I wouldn't have spent the money. . . But now I've bought it. . . Look!" She fumbled in her bag and brought out a small white box with an elastic band round it. "It's a cigarette case. . . I noticed that you always carry the pack in your pocket. . . ." She opened the box, took out a flat silver case engraved with stripes close together, flipped it open and held it out to her son. It was filled with Oriental cigarettes, and she took the opportunity of helping herself to one and making Marcello light it for her.

He was a little embarrassed, and, looking at the cigarette case lying open on his mother's knee, said, without touching it, "It's a very beautiful one and I don't know how to thank you, Mother. . . Perhaps it's even a little too beautiful for me."

"Ugh," said his mother, "how tiresome you are!" She closed the case and, with a prettily intolerant gesture, poked it into Marcello's coat pocket. The car turned the corner of a street rather sharply, and she fell on top of him. She took advantage of this to put her two hands on his shoulders, throwing back her head slightly and looking at him. "Won't you give me a kiss," she said, "in return for the present?"

Marcello bent down and touched his mother's cheek with his lips. She threw herself back in her seat and said with a sigh, putting her hand on her breast, "How hot it is! . . . When you were little, I shouldn't have had to ask you for a kiss. . . You were such an affectionate little boy."

"Mother," said Marcello all of a sudden, "d'you remember the winter when Father was first taken ill?"

"Indeed I do," said his mother, "it was a terrible winter. . . He wanted a separation from me, and to carry you off with him. . . He was mad already. . . Lucky—I mean luckily for you—he went completely mad, and then it was obvious that I was right in wanting to keep you with me. . . But why?"

"Well, Mother," said Marcello, taking care not to look at her, "what I dreamed of, all that winter, was not to go

on living with you any more—with you and Father—but be sent away to school. . . . Not that that prevented me from being fond of you. . . . That's why, when you said that I've changed since then, you're saying something that isn't right. . . . I was just the same then as I am now. . . . and then, as now, I couldn't bear hubbub and disorder . . . that's all." He had spoken drily, almost harshly, but almost at once he repented, seeing a mortified expression darkening his mother's face. And yet he did not want to say anything that might sound as though he were retracting. He had spoken the truth, and that, indeed, was the only thing he could do. At the same time he was again conscious, more intensely than ever, of the oppression of his customary melancholy, reawakened by the unpleasant realization that he had been lacking in filial piety. His mother said in a resigned tone of voice, "Perhaps you're right." At that moment the car came to a stop.

They got out and walked to the gate of the clinic. The street lay in a quiet neighborhood, on the edge of an ancient royal villa. It was a short street. On one side there was a row of five or six old-fashioned suburban houses partially hidden among trees. Along the other side ran the railings of the clinic. At the end of the street the villa was blocked by the old gray wall and the thick vegetation of the royal park. Marcello had been visiting his father at least once a month for many years; yet he had never grown accustomed to these visits, and he always experienced a mingled feeling of repugnance and discomfort. It was much the same sort of feeling that he had when he went to see his mother in the house in which he had spent his childhood and youth. But it was very much stronger. His mother's disorder and decay seemed still to be curable; but for his father's madness there was no remedy, and it seemed to point to a disorder and decay of a more general, and utterly incurable, kind. And as he came into that quiet street at his mother's side, his heart was oppressed by a hateful sensation of wretchedness and his knees shook. He was aware that he had turned pale, and for a moment, as he cast a hasty glance

at the black spikes of the railings, he felt a hysterical desire to give up the visit and make some excuse to run away. His mother, who had not noticed his agitation, stopped in front of the small black iron gate and pressed the clinic button saying, "D'you know what his latest fixation is?"

"What?"

"He thinks he's one of Mussolini's ministers. . . It began about a month ago. . . I suppose because they let him read the papers."

Marcello frowned but said nothing. The gate opened and a young male nurse appeared: he wore a white robe and was tall and plump and fair, with a shaven head and a white, puffy face. "Good day, Franz," said Marcello's mother graciously. "How is he?"

"We're better today than yesterday," said the young man, speaking with a harsh German accent. "Yesterday we were very bad."

"Very bad?"

"We had to put on the strait jacket," explained the male nurse, still speaking in the plural, in the affected manner of a governess speaking of her charges.

"The strait jacket. . . How awful!" In the meantime they had passed through the gate and were walking along a narrow path between the surrounding wall and the wall of the clinic. "The strait jacket, you ought to see it. . . . It's not really a jacket, it's like two sleeves that hold the arms still. . . Before I saw it, I used to imagine it was like a nightshirt, one of those with a Greek key pattern at the bottom. . . It's so sad to see him tied up like that, with his arms tight against his sides." She went on talking in a light, almost gay, tone of voice.

They went round the clinic and came out into an open space in front of the main façade. The clinic, a white, three-floored suburban villa, had the appearance of an ordinary dwelling, apart from the iron gratings over the windows. Hurrying up the stairs under the porch, the male nurse said, "The Professor's expecting you, Signora Clerici." He proceeded the two visitors into a bare, rather dark entrance hall and went and knocked at a closed door,

above which was an enameled plate with the word "Director" on it.

The door opened and the director of the clinic, Professor Ermini, came rushing out, his towering, massive figure bearing down upon his visitors. "Signora, I'm delighted to see you. . . Doctor Clerici, how are you?" His stentorian voice echoed like a bronze gong through the frozen silence of the clinic, between its bare walls. Marcello's mother put out a hand which the professor, bending with visible effort, his huge body enveloped in its robe, gallantly insisted on kissing; Marcello himself, on the other hand, greeted him with the utmost sobriety. The professor's face was extremely like that of a white owl, with large round eyes, a big, curved, beaklike nose, tufts of red mustache falling over a wide, clamorous mouth. Its expression, however, was not that of the melancholy night bird, but was jovial, though with a joviality that was carefully studied and shot through with a kind of cold wariness. He led Marcello and his mother up the stairs. When they were half way up, a metal object, hurled violently from the landing above, came bouncing down the stairs. At the same time a piercing scream rang out, followed by a peal of scornful laughter. The professor bent and picked up the object, an aluminum plate. "It's Signora Donesgalli," he said, turning towards the two visitors. "Don't be alarmed. . . She's just an old lady who's usually perfectly quiet but who, every now and then, gets excited and throws anything she can lay her hands on. . ." He laughed. "Why, she'd be a champion bowls-player, if we let her. . ." He handed the plate to the male nurse and walked on, chattering, down a long corridor between two rows of closed doors. "Why, Signora, you're still in Rome. I thought you'd gone off to the mountains or by the sea by this time."

"I'm going in about a month," she replied. "But I don't know where. . . . For once I should like *not* to go to Venice."

"You take my advice, Signora," said the professor, as he turned a corner in the corridor, "and go to Ischia. . . I was there just the other day on a trip. . . . It's real

marvelous. . . . We went to a restaurant kept by a certain Carminiello, where we had a fish soup that was a positive poem." The professor turned half around and made a vulgar but expressive gesture with two fingers at the corner of his mouth. "A poem, I tell you—hunks of fish as big as that . . . and a bit of everything besides—little octopuses, rascasse, dog fish, small oysters—the latter particularly good—shrimps, small cuttlefish . . . all combined with a delicious gravy *alla maringara* . . . garlic, oil, tomato, sweet peppers. . . . Signora, words fail me." After assuming a comic, Neopolitan accent for his description of the fish soup, the professor fell back into his native Roman, and added, "D'you know what I said to my wife?—How about getting a nice little house in Ischia before the year's out?"

"Personally, I prefer Capri," said Marcello's mother.

"But that's a place for literary people and invert," said the professor in a rather brutal way. At that moment a series of piercing shrieks reached them from one of the cells. The professor went to the door, opened the peep hole, looked through it for a few seconds, closed it again, and turning back, concluded, "Ischia, my dear Signora. . . . Ischia is the place. Fish soup, sea, sun, life in the open air . . . there's nowhere like Ischia."

Franz, the male nurse, who had been walking a few steps in front of them, now stood waiting beside one of the doors, his massive figure clear cut against the bright light from the window at the end of the corridor. "Has he taken up his usual position?" asked the professor in a low voice. The young man nodded. The professor opened the door and went in, followed by Marcello and his mother.

It was a small, bare room, with a bed fixed to the wall and a white wooden table facing a window with the usual iron grating over it. Sitting at the table with his back to the door, busily writing, Marcello, with a shudder of disgust, saw his father. A tousled mass of white hair stuck out from his head above his thin neck, half hidden by the wide collar of his stiff cape of striped cloth. He was sitting slightly askew, his feet thrust into two huge felt slip-

pers, his elbows and knees turned outwards, his head on one side. Exactly, thought Marcello, like a pug dog with broken wires. The entrance of his three visitors did not make him turn around; on the contrary, it seemed to redouble his attention and zeal over what he was writing. The professor went and stood between the window and the table and said with false joviality, "Well, Major, how goes it today? . . . How are you?"

The madman did not answer; he merely raised his hand, as much as to say, "One moment, don't you see I'm busy?" The professor gave Marcello's mother an understanding look and said, "Still at that report, eh, Major? But isn't it going to be too long? . . . The Duce hasn't time to read things if they're too long. . . . He himself is always brief, concise. . . . Brevity, conciseness, Major."

The madman made the same sign as before, waving his bony hand; then, with a strange, wild craziness, he threw a sheet of paper up into the air over his own bowed head. It landed in the middle of the room, and Marcello bent and picked it up. It contained nothing but a few incomprehensible words in a writing full of flourishes and underlinings. Marcello could not be sure even that they were words. While he was examining the paper, the madman began throwing more pieces into the air, still with the same gesture as though he were furiously busy. The sheets of paper came flying up over his white head and were scattered about all over the room. As he threw them up in the air, his gestures became more and more violent, and soon the whole room was full of little sheets of square paper. "Poor dear," said Marcello's mother; "he always did have a passion for writing."

The professor bent forward slightly to speak to the madman. "Major," he said, "here are your wife and son. . . . Don't you want to see them?"

This time the madman spoke, at last, in a low, muttering, hurried, hostile voice, like someone who has been disturbed in the middle of an important occupation. "Let them come back tomorrow . . . unless they have any concrete proposals to make. . . . Can't you see my antechamber's filled with people that I shan't have time to receive?"

"He thinks he's a minister," Marcello's mother whispered to him.

"Minister for Foreign Affairs," the professor confirmed.

"That Hungarian affair," said the madman all of a sudden in an urgent, subdued, troubled voice, still busily writing, "that Hungarian affair. . . . And the head of the government in Prague. . . . And what are they doing in London? And the French, why can't they understand? But *why* can't they understand? Why? Why? Why?" With each "why?" the voice of the madman rose higher, until finally with the last one that he almost screamed, he leaped from his chair and turned around, facing his visitors. Marcello raised his eyes and looked at him. Beneath the white, upstanding hair, the thin, brown, wasted face, with its deeply scored, vertical wrinkles, bore imprinted upon it an expression of solemn, conscientious gravity, of anguish, almost, from the effort of rising to an imaginary occasion of speech-making and ceremony. The madman was holding one of his little sheets of paper on a level with his eyes; and without more ado he began reading, with a strange, breathless haste: "Duce, leader of heroes, king of earth and sea and sky, prince, priest, emperor, commander and soldier"—here he made a gesture of impatience, tempered however by a certain ceremoniousness, as much as to say, "*et cetera, et cetera*"—"Duce, in this place, which . . ."—and he made another gesture, as if to say, "I'll skip that part, it's superfluous"—then he started again: "In this place I have written a report that I beg you to read from the first"—he stopped and looked at his visitors—"to the last line. Here is my report."

After these introductory words, he threw the sheet of paper up in the air, turned toward the table, took up another and began reading the report. But this time Marcello could not catch a single word: it was true that the madman was reading clearly and distinctly, but his extraordinary haste caused him to run one word into another as if the entire speech consisted of one single word of inordinate length. The words, thought Marcello, must be melting upon his tongue even before he uttered them, as though the devouring fire of madness had dissolved their

shapes like wax and fused them into a single oratorical substance, of a soft, elusive indistinctness. As he went on reading, the words seemed to enter more inextricably one into the other, becoming shorter and shorter and more and more contracted, and the madman himself began to appear overwhelmed by this verbal avalanche. With increasing frequency he took to throwing away the sheets of paper after he had read only the first line; until finally he broke off his reading altogether, leaped with surprising agility onto the bed, and there, retreating into the corner at its head, standing upright against the wall, plunged into a declamatory speech.

That he thought himself to be haranguing an audience, Marcello understood more from his gestures than from his words which, as before, were disconnected and senseless. Like an orator facing a crowd from an imaginary balcony, the madman now raised both arms toward the ceiling; now bent forward with one hand outstretched, as though to introduce some subtle point; now threatened, with fist clenched; now raised his hands, palms outward, to the level of his face. At a certain point there was evidently a burst of applause from the imaginary crowd he was addressing; for the madman, holding out his hand in a characteristic gesture with palm turned downward, seemed to be demanding silence. But the applause, clearly, did not cease, in fact it increased in intensity; and then, having again asked for silence with that same gesture of entreaty, the madman jumped down from the bed, ran across to the professor and, holding him by the sleeve, implored him in a tearful voice, "Do please make them keep quiet. . . . What does applause matter to me? . . . A declaration of war. . . . How can one make a declaration of war if their applause prevents one from speaking?"

"We'll make the declaration of war tomorrow, Major," said the professor, looking down at the madman from the height of his towering figure.

"Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow," yelled the madman in a sudden excess of fury in which anger was mingled with despair, "it's always tomorrow. . . . The declaration of war has got to be made now . . . at once."

"But why, Major? What does it matter? Now, in this

knowing what he's suffering. . . . I know that I may if I happen to be underneath a bell tower when the bells are ringing, I feel I'm going mad."

"But does he suffer?" asked Marcello.

"Wouldn't you suffer if for hours and hours you heard great bronze bells ringing very close to your ear?" The professor turned to the sick man and added, "Now we'll make the bells stop ringing. . . . We'll send the bell-ringer to sleep. . . . We'll give you something to drink and you won't hear them any more." He made a sign to the male nurse, who immediately went out. Turning to Marcello again, he went on, "These are rather serious forms of disorder. . . . The patient passes from a state of frantic cheerfulness to one of profound depression. . . . Just now, while he was reading, he was wildly excited, now he's depressed. Do you want to say anything to him?"

Marcello looked at his father, who was still whimpering pitifully, his head in his hands, and said in a cold voice, "No, I have nothing to say to him, and besides, what use? . . . He wouldn't understand anyhow."

"Sometimes they understand," said the professor; "they understand more than you think, they recognize people even we doctors are taken in. . . ." He laughed. "It's so simple."

Marcello's mother went over to the madman and said in an affable sort of way, "Antonio, do you recognize me? . . . Here's Marcello, your son. . . . He's getting married the day after tomorrow. . . . D'you understand? He's getting married."

The madman looked up hopefully at his wife, as an injured dog looks up at his master when the latter bends down over him and asks him, in human words, what is the matter. The doctor turned toward Marcello, exclaiming, "Getting married, getting married! Why, my dear Doctor, I knew nothing about it. . . . My warmest congratulations. My most sincere good wishes."

"Thank you," said Marcello drily.

His mother, moving toward the door, said in her ingenuously way, "Poor dear, he doesn't understand. . . . If he did, he wouldn't be pleased, any more than I am."

"Please, Mother," said Marcello shortly.

"Never mind, your wife has to please *you*, not other people," she replied in a conciliating tone. She turned back towards the madman and said to him, "Good-bye, Antonio."

"The bells," whimpered the madman.

They went out into the corridor, meeting Franz as he came in carrying a glass with the soothing mixture in it. The professor closed the door and said, "It's a curious thing, Doctor, how insane people keep up with the news, how up-to-date they are . . . and how sensitive they are to everything that interests the general public. . . . Now, for instance, there's fascism, there's the Duce, and so you'll find that a very large number of them develop fixations, like your father, with regard to fascism and the Duce. . . . During the war there was an endless number of insane people who thought they were generals and who wanted to take the place of Cadorna or Diaz. . . . And more recently, at the time of Nobile's flight to the North Pole, I had at least three patients who knew for certain exactly where the famous red tent was and who had invented a special apparatus for rescuing the shipwrecked men. . . . Mad people are always abreast of the times. . . . In spite of their madness they do not cease, fundamentally, to take part in public life, and madness itself is the means they use to take part in it—in their own character, of course, as good, but mad, citizens." The doctor laughed coldly, delighted with his own wit. And then, turning toward Marcello's mother, but with the obvious intention of flattering Marcello himself, he said, "But as far as the Duce goes, we're all just as mad as your husband, aren't we, Signora?—mad enough to need tying up, mad enough for treatment with the douche and the strait jacket. . . . The whole of Italy is just one big lunatic asylum, ha, ha, ha."

"In that way my son is certainly quite mad," said Marcello's mother, naïvely reinforcing the doctor's compliments, "in fact I was saying to Marcello, on our way here, that there were certain points of resemblance between him and his poor father."

Marcello hung back in order to avoid hearing what

they were saying. He saw them walk away toward the far end of the corridor, then turn the corner and disappear still chattering. He stopped; he was still holding in his hand the sheet of paper upon which his father had written his declaration of war. He hesitated, took out his wallet and put the paper into it. Then he hastened his step and rejoined his mother and the doctor on the ground floor.

"Well then, good-bye, Professor," his mother was saying. "But that poor dear man—is there really no way of curing him?"

"For the present there is nothing science can do," answered the doctor without a hint of solemnity, as though repeating a worn-out mechanical formula.

"Good-bye, Professor," said Marcello.

"Good-bye, Doctor, and again, my warmest and sincerest good wishes."

They walked down the narrow gravel path and out into the street to the car. Alberi was there, beside the open door, cap in hand. They got in without a word and the car started. Marcello sat silent a moment and then asked his mother, "Mother, I want to ask you a question. . . . I think I can speak frankly to you, can't I?"

"What is it?" said his mother vaguely, examining her face in the little mirror of her powder-compact.

"This man that I call my father and that we've just visited—is he really my father?"

His mother started laughing. "Really," she said, "Sometimes you are rather strange. . . . And why shouldn't he be your father?"

"Mother . . . at that time you already had—" Marcello hesitated and then concluded—"you already had lovers. . . . Isn't it possible. . . . ?"

"Oh no, it isn't possible at all," said his mother with calm cynicism. "When I first decided to be unfaithful to your father you were already two years old. . . . The funny thing about it is," she went on, "that it was precisely with this idea of your being another man's son that your father's madness began. . . . He had a fixed idea that you were not his son. . . . And d'you know what he

did one day? He took a photograph of me with you as a baby—"

"And made holes through the eyes of both of us," concluded Marcello.

"Ah, so you knew that," said his mother, rather astonished. "Well, that was really the beginning of his madness. . . . He was obsessed by the idea that you were the son of a certain man that I used to see occasionally at that time. . . . I don't need to say that it was entirely his own imagination. . . . You're *his* son, one has only to look at you. . . ."

"Surely I'm more like you than him," Marcello could not help saying.

"You're like both of us," said his mother, clinching the matter. She put her compact back in her bag, and added, "I've told you already: if there were nothing else, you've both got a fixation about politics—he like a madman, and you, thank God, like a sane person."

Marcello said nothing, but turned his face toward the window. The idea of resembling his father inspired in him an intense disgust. The reference to flesh and blood, in family relationships, had always been repellent to him as an impure, unjust definition. But the resemblance to which his mother alluded not merely disgusted, but in some obscure way frightened him. What connection existed between his father's madness and his own most secret being? He remembered the phrase he had read on the sheet of paper, "Murder and melancholy," and shuddered thoughtfully. The melancholy was already upon him, like a second skin more sensitive than his real one; and as for the murder. . . .

The car was now going through streets in the center of the town, in the false blue light of dusk. Marcello said to his mother, "I'll get out here," and he leaned forward to knock on the glass in order to warn Alberi. "Then I'll see you on your return," said his mother, giving him implicitly to understand that she would not be coming to the wedding; and he was grateful to her for her reticence. Frivolity and cynicism had at least that advantage. He got out, banged the door, and disappeared into the crowd.

PART TWO

CHAPTER 8

As soon as the train began to move, Marcello left the window where he was standing talking to his mother-in-law—or rather, listening to her conversation—and went back into the compartment. Giulia, on the other hand, remained at the window; and from the compartment Marcello could see her in the corridor as she leaned out and waved her handkerchief with an anxious urgency that gave a certain pathos to a gesture otherwise quite ordinary. Doubtless, he thought, she would stand there waving her handkerchief as long as she thought she could catch a glimpse of her mother's figure on the platform and, for her, the moment when she ceased to see the figure would mark in the clearest possible way her own complete and final detachment from her life as a girl—detachment she had both feared and longed for and which, with her own departure in the train while her mother was left behind, took on a painfully concrete character. Marcello looked a moment longer at his wife as she hung out of the window, in her light-colored dress that was ruckled up, by the movement of her arm, over the well-defined forms of her figure; then he sank back on the cushions, closing his eyes. When he opened them again his wife was no longer in the corridor and the train was already out in the open country. They were crossing an arid, treeless plain, already wrapped in twilight obscurity, beneath a green sky. Here and there the ground rose up into bald hills, and between these hills appeared wide valleys surprisingly devoid both of human habitations and of human figures. A few brick ruins, on the top

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As soon as the train began to move Marcello ran to the window where he was standing talking to his mother-in-law—or rather, listening to her conversation—and went back into the compartment. Giulia, on the other hand, remained at the window; and from the compartment Marcello could see her in the corridor as she leaned out and waved her handkerchief with an anxious urgency that gave a certain pathos to a gesture otherwise quite ordinary. Doubtless, he thought, she would stand there waving her handkerchief as long as she thought she could catch a glimpse of her mother's figure on the platform; and, for her, the moment when she ceased to see that figure would mark in the clearest possible way her own complete and final detachment from her life as a girl—a detachment she had both feared and longed for and which, with her own departure in the train while her mother was left behind, took on a painfully concrete character. Marcello looked a moment longer at his wife as she hung out of the window, in her light-colored dress that was ruckled up, by the movement of her arms over the well-defined forms of her figure; then he sank back on the cushions, closing his eyes. When he opened them again his wife was no longer in the corridor and the train was already out in the open country. They were crossing an arid, treeless plain, already wrapped in twilight and security, beneath a green sky. Here and there the ground rose up into bald hills, and between these hills appeared wide valleys surprisingly devoid both of human habitations and of human figures. A few brick ruins, on the

of the hills, emphasized the feeling of solitude. It was a restful landscape, thought Marcello, inviting one to reflection and fancy. And now, over the horizon at the far side of the plain, the moon had risen, round and blood-red, with a glistening white star at its right hand.

His wife had disappeared and Marcello hoped that she would not come back for a few minutes. He wanted to think, and for the last time, to feel himself alone. He went back, in memory, over the things that he had done during the last few days, and realized, as he recalled them, that they brought him a feeling of vague but profound satisfaction. This, he thought, was the only possible way in which to change one's own life and one's own personality — by action, by movement in time and in space. As usual, he was especially pleased at the things that tightened his bonds to the normal, ordinary, expected world. The wedding morning: Giulia, in her wedding dress, running joyfully from one room to another in her rustling silk; himself entering the elevator with a bunch of lilies of the valley in his gloved hand; his mother-in-law who, the moment he came in, threw herself sobbing into his arms; Giulia pulling him behind the door of a cupboard in order to kiss him at her ease; the arrival of the witnesses, two of Giulia's friends, a doctor and a lawyer, and two friends of his own from the Ministry; leaving the house for the church, with people looking out of the windows and from the pavements, as they went away in three cars — himself and Giulia in the first, the witnesses in the second, and his mother-in-law and two female friends in the third.

A curious thing had happened during the drive. The car had stopped at a traffic signal, and suddenly there had appeared at the window a red, bearded face with a bald forehead and a prominent nose. It was a beggar; but, instead of asking for alms, he had said, in a hoarse voice, "How about giving me a bridal sugar plum, you two?" — and at the same time had thrust his hand into the car. The sudden apparition of the face at the window, the indiscreet hand stretched out toward Giulia, had irritated Marcello, who with excessive severity, had answered, "Go on, get away, we've nothing for you." At which the man, who was probably drunk, had shouted out at the top of

his voice, "A curse upon you!" and had disappeared. Giulia, frightened, had clung to him, murmuring, "It'll bring us bad luck"; and he, shrugging his shoulders, had replied, "Nonsense . . . he's just a drunk." Then the car had started again and the incident had slipped almost at once from his mind.

Inside the church everything had been normal, in other words quietly solemn, ritual, ceremonious. A little crowd of relations and friends sat here and there in the front pews before the high altar, the men in dark clothes, the women in light-colored, springlike frocks. The church, very rich and ornate, was dedicated to a saint of the Counter-Reformation. Behind the high altar, beneath a canopy of gilded bronze, there was, indeed a statue of this saint in gray marble, larger than life, gazing with eyes upturned to heaven and palms outstretched. Behind the statue, the apse of the church was covered with frescoes in the baroque manner, lively and full of flourishes.

Giulia and he had knelt down in front of the marble balustrade, on a red velvet cushion. The witnesses stood in order behind them, two by two. The service had been a long one, for Giulia's family had insisted on giving it the greatest possible solemnity. From the very beginning, an organ up in the balcony over the entrance door had started playing and had gone on continuously, now softly snoring, now bursting forth in a triumphant clamor beneath the echoing vaults. The priest had been extremely slow—so much so that Marcello, after observing with satisfaction that the ceremony, in all its details, was exactly as he had imagined and desired, after assuring himself that he was doing just what millions of married couples had been doing for hundreds of years before him, and allowed his attention to wander and had started examining the church. It was not a beautiful church, but it was very large, and had been conceived and built, like all Jesuit churches, in order to achieve a theatrical solemnity. The enormous statue of the saint, kneeling in a ecstatic attitude beneath his canopy, was erected over an altar painted to represent marble and crowded with commonplace silver candlesticks, vases of flowers, ornamental statuettes and bronze lamps. Behind the canopy was the curve of the

apse, with its frescoes by some painter of the period: vaporous, swelling clouds, such as might have figured on the curtain of an opera-house, lay across a blue sky streaked by swords of light from a hidden sun. Of the clouds sat various sacred personages, painted with a few bold strokes and with more decorative sense than religious spirit. Prominent among the others and overtopping them all was the figure of the Eternal Father, and suddenly Marcello, as he looked at that bearded, haloed face, could not help seeing in it the face of the beggar who had appeared at the window of the car asking for a sugar plum and who had then cursed him. At that moment the organ was playing loudly and with an almost menacing sternness which seemed to admit no touch of sweetness; and so it was that a resemblance that in other circumstances would have made him smile (the Eternal Father disguised as a beggar putting his head in at the window of a taxi and demanding a sugar plum) recalled to his mind, for some inexplicable reason, those Biblical verses concerning Cain which his eye had happened to fall upon when he had opened a Bible one day, a few years after the Lino affair: *What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.*

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

And the Lord said unto him, Therefore, whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

These verses had seemed to him that day to have been

without especially for him, cursed as he was, and his voluntary crime and yet, by that same curse, made sacred and unchangeable. And then, when he had read those several times and meditated upon them, he had got tired of thinking about them, and had forgotten them. But that morning in church, as he looked at the faces in the fresco, they had come back to him and once again they had seemed well suited to his own case. Cold, but not without a gloomy conviction that he was turned into the instrument of his thought into a self fertile with analogy and significance, he had speculated, while the service continued, upon this point. If there was really such a thing as a curse, why had it been hurled against him? With this question his mind was again clouded over with the clinging melancholy that continually oppressed him, the melancholy of a man who is lost and who knows that there is nothing he can do to save himself—and he had told himself that by instinct, at any rate, if not by conscience, he knew that he was under a curse. Not because he had killed Lino but because he had sought and was still seeking to free himself from the burden of remorse of corruption, of abnormality which that far-off misdeed had laid upon him, without having recourse to religion or the abodes of religion. But what could he do about it: he had gone on to think; he was like that and he could not change himself. There was indeed no ill will in him, only the honest acceptance of the condition to which he was born, of the world as he found it. It was a condition far removed from religion, a world in which the place of religion was taken by other things. He would have preferred, certainly, to have entrusted his life to the ancient benevolent figures of the Christian faith, to God who was so just, to the Virgin so motherly, to Christ so merciful. But, at the very moment when he was conscious of this desire, he realized that his own life did not belong to him and that therefore he could not entrust it to whomsoever he wished; and that he was outside religion and could not enter into it again, even in order to purify himself and become normal. Normality, as he had thought, was not elsewhere; or perhaps it was yet to come, and

reconstructed through painful effort, through doubt and through blood.

As if to confirm these thoughts, he had at that moment looked at the woman beside him, at the woman who in a few minutes would be his wife. Giulia was kneeling, her hands clasped together, her face and eyes turned toward the altar, carried away by her own joyful, hopeful ecstasy. And yet, at his look—as though she had been aware of it on her body like the contact of a hand—she had at once turned and smiled at him with her eyes and her mouth, with a tender, humble, grateful smile full of an almost animal-like innocence. He had smiled back at her, though less openly; and then, as though it had sprung from that smile, he had felt—perhaps for the first time since he had known her—an impulse, if not actually of love, at least of profound affection mingled with compassion and tenderness. And then it had seemed to him that his look had undressed her, had removed both her wedding dress and her most intimate garments, and that he could see her, young and fresh and healthy with her rounded breasts and belly, kneeling there naked beside him on the red velvet cushion, clasping her hands. And he was naked too; and, irrespective of any ritual consecration, they were on the point of being truly united, as animals in the woods were united; and this union, whether or not he believed in the rite in which he was taking part, would really come about, and from it, as he wished, children would be born. With this thought it had seemed to him, for the first time, that he was placing his feet on firm ground, and he had reflected, "This woman in a short time will be my wife . . . and I shall possess her . . . and she, when she has been possessed, will conceive children . . . and this, for the present, for lack of anything better, will be my point of departure toward normality."

But at that moment he had seen Giulia moving her lips in prayer, and, as he watched that eager movement of her mouth, it had seemed to him that her nudity had suddenly been clothed again, as if by enchantment, with her wedding dress, and he had realized that, she, Giulia, believed firmly in the ritual consecration of their union; and he had not been displeased at this discovery; in

fact, it had brought him a feeling almost of relief. For Giulia normality was not a thing that had to be found or reconstructed; it was there; and she was immersed in it and, whatever happened, would never forsake it.

And so, as the ceremony came to an end, there had been a sufficiency of feeling and of affection on his part. A feeling and an affection of which he had at first thought himself incapable, and that he felt to be inspired by deep impulses coming from within himself rather than suggested by the place and the marriage rite. Everything, in fact, had been carried out according to the rules of tradition, in such a way as to satisfy not only those who believed in such rules but himself also, who did not believe in them but wished to act as though he did. As he was walking out with his wife on his arm, at the moment when they stopped in the doorway at the top of the steps leading down from the church, he had heard Giulia's mother behind him, say to a friend, "He is such a good, kind man. . . . You saw how deeply moved he was. . . . He loves her so much. . . . Really Giulia *couldn't* have found a better husband." And he had been pleased at having been able to inspire so satisfactory an illusion.

As he came to the end of these reflections, he was conscious of a sort of sharp, zealous impatience to reassume his role as a husband at the point at which he had left after the wedding ceremony. He turned his eyes away from the window, that now—since night had fallen—was full of nothing but black, faintly glittering darkness, and looked out into the corridor in search of Giulia. He was aware of a slight feeling of irritation at her absence, and this gave him pleasure, for it seemed to him a sign of naturalness with which he was now playing his part. He wondered whether he ought to possess Giulia in the inconvenient sleeping berth or wait till they arrived at the end of the first stage of their journey. At this thought he was aware of a sudden, strong desire, and made up his mind to possess her in the train. That was the right thing to happen in such a case, he thought; besides, he felt strongly inclined to it, both from carnal appetite and from a kind of self-satisfied loyalty to his role as a husband. Giulia, however, was a virgin (a fact he knew)

certain) and to possess her would not be easy. He realized that he would be almost pleased if, after trying in vain to break her virginity, he was forced to wait for the hotel at S. and the convenience of a double bed. Such things happened to the newly wed—ridiculous though utterly normal—and he wanted to be like the most normal of the normal, even at the cost of appearing to be impotent.

He was on the point of going out into the corridor when the door opened and Giulia came in. She was in a skirt and blouse and had taken off her jacket, which she was carrying over her arm. Her comely bosom pressed exuberantly against the white linen of her blouse, infusing into it a faint, pinkish flesh-color; her face was radiant with joyous satisfaction; only her eyes, larger, softer, more languid than usual, seemed to reveal an amorous alarm, an almost frightened excitement. Marcello noticed all these things with complacency. Giulia was indeed the bride who prepares to surrender herself for the first time. She turned a little awkwardly (she always moved a little awkwardly, he thought, but it was an attractive awkwardness, like that of a healthy, innocent animal) in order to shut the door and pull down the curtain, and then, standing in front of him, tried to hang up her jacket on a hook beside the luggage rack. But the train was going very fast, and as it crossed a switch at full speed the whole car seemed to heel over and she fell on top of him. Cunningly, she corrected her fall and sat on his knees, putting her arms round his neck. Marcello felt the full weight of her body rest on his own thin legs, and automatically he placed his arm round her waist. She said, in a low voice, "D'you love me?" and at the same time lowered her face toward his, seeking his mouth with her own. They kissed lingeringly, while the train ran on at a high speed—the accomplice, so to speak, of their kiss, since at every jolt their teeth knocked together and Giulia's nose seemed anxious to penetrate his face. At last they separated, and Giulia, without getting off his knee, conscientiously took a handkerchief from her bag and wiped his lips, saying, "You've got about half a pound of lipstick on your mouth." Marcello, stiff in the legs, took advantage of

another jolt of the train to slide her heavy body away from him on to the seat. "You naughty creature," she said, "don't you want me?"

"They still have to come and make up the beds," said Marcello, rather embarrassed.

"Just fancy," she went on without any transition, looking all round her, "it's the first time I've ever traveled in a sleeping car."

Marcello could not help smiling at the simple way in which she spoke, and asked, "D'you like it?"

"Yes, I like it very much," she said, looking around again. "When do they come to get the beds ready?"

"Soon."

They were silent; and then Marcello looked at his wife and found that she, too, was looking at him, but with a changed expression—with timidity and apprehension, at most, although the vivid, happy expression of a few minutes before still lingered in her face. She saw he was looking at her and smiled as if to excuse herself, and then, without a word, put out her hand and pressed his. From her moist and loving eyes two tears slipped down his cheeks, followed by two more. Giulia went on looking at him as she wept, trying all the time, pitifully, to smile through her tears. At last, with sudden impetuosity, she bent down and started wildly kissing his hand. Marcello was disconcerted by this weeping. Giulia was by nature cheerful and not very sentimental, and it was the first time he had seen her in tears. But she gave him no time to come to any conclusion, for she sat up and said hurriedly: "Forgive my crying like this . . . but I was thinking that you're so much better than I am and that I'm not worthy of you."

"Now you're starting to talk like your mother," said Marcello smiling.

She blew her nose and then replied calmly, "No, Mother-in-law says these things without knowing why she says them . . . But I have a good reason."

"What reason?"

She looked at him for some time and then explained: "I've got to tell you something, and afterwards perhaps

you won't love me any more. . . . But I've got to tell you."

"What is it?"

She answered slowly, looking at him closely as though she wanted to catch the very first sign of the scornful expression she feared. "I'm not what you think I am," she said.

"What d'you mean?"

"I'm not. . . . Well, in fact, I'm not a virgin."

Marcello looked at her and suddenly understood that the normal character which he had hitherto attributed to his wife did not, in reality, exist. He did not know what was concealed behind this incipient confession, but he knew now for certain that Giulia, according to what she herself had said, was not what he had thought. There came over him a premonitory feeling of satiety at the idea of what he was going to hear, and a desire, almost, to refuse to listen to her confidences. But the first thing to do was to reassure her; and this was easy for him, because whether that famous virginity of hers existed or not did not really matter to him in the least. He replied in an affectionate voice, "Don't worry . . . I married you because I was fond of you, not because you were a virgin."

Giulia shook her head and said: "I knew you had a modern mentality . . . and that you wouldn't make a fuss about it . . . But I had to tell you, all the same."

"A modern mentality," Marcello could not help thinking with some amusement. The phrase was like Giulia herself, and made up for the absent virginity. It was an innocent phrase, though its innocence was not quite the kind he would have expected. Taking her hand, he said, "Come on, don't let's think about it any more," and he smiled at her.

Giulia smiled back at him. But again, while she was still smiling, tears filled her eyes and ran down her cheeks. Marcello protested. "Come, come . . . what's the matter now? . . . I've told you I don't mind."

Giulia's response was a singular one. She threw her arms around his neck and turned away her head, holding it against his chest and looking down so that Marcello

could not see her face. "I've got to tell you everything," she said.

"What d'you mean, everything?"

"Everything that happened to me."

"But it doesn't matter."

"Please let me. . . . It may be silly, but if I don't tell you I shall feel I'm hiding something from you."

"But why?" said Marcello, stroking her hair. "I suppose you had a lover . . . someone you thought you were fond of . . . or that you really were fond of. . . . What do I have to know about it?"

"No, I wasn't fond of him," she answered at once, almost contemptuously, "and I never thought I was. . . . We were lovers more or less right up to the day when we got engaged to you. . . . But he wasn't a young man like you. . . . He was an old man of sixty—disgusting, as hard, and nasty, and exacting . . . a friend of the family—you know him."

"Who is it?"

"Fenizio, the lawyer," she said briefly.

Marcello gave a start. "But he was one of our wretched ones. . . ."

"Yes, he insisted. . . . I didn't want him to be, but I couldn't refuse. . . . It was a wonder that he even allowed me to get married. . . ."

Marcello recalled that he had never cared for this lawyer Fenizio, whom he had very often met by chance at Giulia's home; he was a small, rather fair man, bald, with gold spectacles, a pointed nose that wrinkled up when he laughed, and a lipless mouth. A man, he also recalled, who was very calm and cold but who, within that calmness and coldness, has his own unpleasant kind of aggressiveness and pugnance. He was strong, too; one day he had taken off his coat and rolled up his shirt sleeves, showing thick, white arms bulging with muscle. "But whatever did you see in him?" he could not help exclaiming.

"It was he who saw something in me . . . and very early, too. . . . I was his mistress, not for a month or for a year, but for six years."

Marcello made a quick mental calculation. Giulia was

now twenty-one, or just over; therefore. . . . Astonished, he repeated, "Six years?"

"Yes, six years. . . . I was fifteen when . . . d'you understand?" Giulia, he noticed, although she was speaking of things which, to all appearances, still gave her pain, kept up the usual drawling, good-natured tone that she used for the most indifferent scraps of gossip. "He took advantage of me on the very day, more or less, that poor Daddy died. . . . If it wasn't the very same day, it was the same week. . . . As a matter of fact, I can tell you the exact date: just eight days after my father's funeral. . . . And remember, he was an intimate friend of my father's, and his trustee. . . ."

She paused for a moment, as if, by her silence, she wished to stress the impious behavior of the man; then she went on, "Mummy was doing nothing but weep at the time, and of course going to church a great deal. . . . He came one evening when I was alone in the flat; Mummy had gone out and the maid was in the kitchen. . . . I was sitting at the table in my room, busy doing my homework. . . . I was preparing for my exam at that time. . . . He came in on tiptoe and went around behind me, then bent over my exercise-book and asked me what I was doing. I told him, without turning around. I hadn't the slightest suspicion, in the first place because I was quite innocent—and you can believe me when I say I was innocent as a two-year-old child—and also because he was like a relation to me . . . I used to call him 'Uncle,' just fancy! . . . Well then, I told him I was preparing my Latin exercise, and he—d'you know what he did?—he took hold of me by my hair, with one hand, but very firmly. . . . He often did that, for a joke, because I had splendid hair, long and wavy, and he said his fingers couldn't resist it. . . . When I felt him pulling, I still thought it was a joke and said to him, 'Let me go, you're hurting . . . '—but instead of letting go, he forced me to get up and holding me at arm's length steered me toward the bed, which was in the corner near the door, as it still is . . . I—just imagine—I was so completely innocent, I still didn't understand . . . and I said to him, I remember, 'Let me go, I've got to do

'exercise.' At that moment he did let go of my hair . . . but no, I can't tell you. . . ."

Marcello was on the point of asking her to continue, thinking that she was ashamed; but Giulia, who had puffed merely in order to time her effects, resumed, "Although I wasn't yet fifteen, I was already very well developed, almost like a grown-up woman. . . . I didn't want to tell you because just to speak of it still hurts me. . . . He let go of my hair and squeezed me against his chest, but so hard that I couldn't even manage to scream and I almost fainted . . . perhaps I really did faint. . . . And then, after that embrace, I don't know what happened. I was lying on the bed and he was on top of me and had understood everything, and all my strength had left me and I was just like an inanimate object in his hands, passive and inert and without any will power . . . and he did just what he wanted with me. . . . Later I cried, and then, to comfort me, he told me he loved me, that he was mad about me—you know, the usual things. . . . But he also told me, in case I hadn't thoroughly understood, that I wasn't to say anything to Mummy unless I wanted him to ruin us. . . . Apparently Daddy, lately, had made a mess of his affairs, and our material welfare now depended on *him*. . . . After that day he came back other times . . . but not regularly . . . always when I wasn't expecting him. . . . He used to come to my room on tiptoe, bend down over me and ask me in a severe voice: 'Have you done your exercise? No? . . . Well, come and do it with me, then.' And then, as usual, he would take me by my hair and conduct me at arm's length to the bed. . . . I tell you, he had an absolute passion for getting hold of my hair." She laughed, almost heartily, at the memory of this habit of her former lover's, one laughs at some characteristic, amiable quality. And so he went on for almost a year, continuing to swear that he loved me and that, if he hadn't had a wife and children, he would have married me . . . and I'm not saying he didn't mean it. . . . But if he had really been fond of me, as he said, there was only one way for him to show it—to leave me alone. . . . Anyhow, after a year, in desperation, I made an attempt to get rid of him: I told

didn't love him and would never love him, that I couldn't go on in that way, that I couldn't get anything done and was in a bad state and hadn't passed my exam, and that if he didn't let me alone I would have to give up my studies altogether. . . . And then he—just imagine—he went and told Mummy that he understood my character and was convinced that I wasn't cut out for intellectual study and that, I was now sixteen, the best thing would be for me to get a job. . . . To start off with, he offered me a post as secretary in his office. . . . D'you see? . . . Of course I resisted as hard as I could, but poor darling Mummy said I was being ungrateful, that he had been, and still was, such a help to us, that I mustn't miss such a fine opportunity; and so, in the end, I was forced to accept. . . . Once I was in his office and with him all day long, there was no possibility of stopping, as you may imagine . . . and so I began again, and finally he got me into the habit of it, and I gave up protesting. . . . You know how it is: I felt there was no hope for me any more and became fatalistic. . . . But when, a year ago, you told me you were fond of me, I went straight to him and said to him that, this time, the whole thing was really finished. . . . He protested, vile creature that he is, and threatened to go to you and tell you the whole story. . . . So d'you know what I did? I picked up a sharp paper cutter that lay on his desk and held the point of it to his throat, and I said, 'If you do that, I'll kill you'; and then I went on, 'He shall know about our relations, it's only right that he should. . . . But I'm going to be the one to tell him, not you. . . . From now on you simply don't exist for me . . . and if you make the slightest attempt to come between him and me I'll kill you. . . . I'll go to prison for it but I'll kill you.' I said this in a tone that made him realize I meant it . . . and from then on he never breathed another word—except when he tried to get back at me by writing that anonymous letter in which he spoke of your father. . . ."

"Ah, so that's who it was," Marcello could not help exclaiming.

"Of course. . . . I recognized the paper at once and typing too." She was silent for a moment, and then, in

sudden anxiety, took Marcello's hand and added: "Now I've told you everything and I feel better. . . . But perhaps I ought not to have told you, perhaps now you won't be able to endure me any more, perhaps you'll hate me."

Marcello did not answer, but remained silent for a long time. Giulia's tale had aroused in his mind neither hatred for the man who had abused her nor pity for her, who had endured that abuse. The very manner in which she had told her story—passionless and sensible, even when she was expressing repugnance or contempt—excluded any feelings so decided as hatred or pity. And so he himself, as it were by contagion, was inclined to regard the matter in a not dissimilar light, with a mixture of indulgence and resignation. He felt, if anything, an entirely physical amazement, unconnected with any sort of criticism—like falling into an unexpected void. And, as a reaction, he was aware of a sharpening of his habitual melancholy at being confronted with this unforeseen confirmation of a rule of decadence to which he had hoped, for a moment, that Giulia might be an exception. Yet his conviction of the profoundly normal character of Giulia's whole personality remained unaffected. Normality, he suddenly realized, did not consist so much in holding aloof from certain experiences as in the standard by which one judged them. Chance had willed that both he and Giulia had had something in their lives to conceal, and, consequently, to confess. But whereas he himself felt utterly incapable of speaking about Lino, Giulia, on the other hand, had not hesitated to reveal to him her relations with the lawyer, choosing for this revelation, the moment which, according to her ideas, was most suitable—the moment of their marriage, which she felt should wipe out the past and open up for her an entirely new way of life. This thought gave him pleasure because in spite of everything it confirmed Giulia's normality, which lay in her ability to indemnify herself by the customary, ancient methods of religion and the affections. Distracted by these reflections, he turned his eyes towards the window and did not notice how alarmed his wife was at his silence. Then he felt her trying to embrace him, and her voice asking him, "You don't say anything."

then . . . you're disgusted with me . . . The truth is that you can't bear me any more and you're disgusted at me."

Marcello wanted to reassure her, and he made a movement to take her in his arms. But he was thwarted by a violent jerk of the train, so that, without meaning to, he ruck her in the face with his elbow. Giulia interpreted his involuntary blow as a gesture of rebuff and immediately rose to her feet. The train entered a tunnel with a long mournful whistle and a thickening of the darkness at the window. Through the clatter, redoubled by the echo of the tunnel, he seemed to catch the sound of a sob from Giulia as, with arms outstretched, she swayed and tumbled towards the door of the compartment. He was surprised and, without getting up, called to her. "Giulia." Her only answer was to open the door and disappear into the corridor, still swaying and stumbling in that distressing manner.

For a moment he sat still, then suddenly alarmed, rose and followed her out. Their compartment was in the middle of the coach, and he saw his wife hurrying along the deserted corridor in the direction of the vestibule. As he saw her moving swiftly over the thick, soft carpet between the mahogany walls, the words she had spoken to her former lover flashed across his mind: "If you say anything I'll kill you!" and he thought he had perhaps been ignorant of one aspect of her character and had mistaken her good nature for sloth. At the same moment he saw her bend down and fumble with the handle of the door. Darting forward, he seized her by the arm and pulled her back.

"What on earth are you doing, Giulia?" he asked in a low voice, through the clatter of the train. "What did you think . . . ? It was the train. . . . I meant to turn round and instead I bumped into you."

She stiffened as he put his arms round her, as though she intended to struggle. But, at the quiet, sincerely surprised tone of his voice, she seemed to calm down suddenly. After a moment, bending her head, she said: "I'm sorry, perhaps I made a mistake, but I had the impression that you hated me, so I just wanted to make an end

of everything . . . It wasn't a gesture; if you hadn't arrived I should have really done it."

"But why? . . . Whatever had come into your head?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Well, to cut a long story short . . . Getting married, for me, was a far more important thing than you think . . . When I decided you couldn't bear me any more, I thought, there's nothing else to be done . . ." She shrugged her shoulders again and added, raising her face toward him with a smile, "just think, you would have been left a widower almost before you were married."

Marcello looked at her for a moment without speaking. Evidently Giulia was sincere; it was perfectly true that she had attached a far greater importance to marriage than he had imagined possible. And he understood, then, with a feeling of astonishment, that her humble remark was an indication of her complete participation in the nuptial rite, which for her—unlike himself—had been what it truly ought to have been, neither more nor less. So it was not surprising that, after a self-surrender so impassioned, she should have thought, at the first disillusionment, of killing herself. He told himself that this was almost a piece of blackmail on Giulia's part: either you forgive me or I shall kill myself; and once again he was conscious of relief at finding her so like what he had wished her to be. Giulia had turned away again and appeared to be gazing at the window. He put his arm round her waist and murmured in her ear, "You know I love you."

She turned at once and kissed him with a passion so impetuous that Marcello was almost frightened. That was the way, he thought, in which pious women in churches sometimes kissed crosses, or relics, or the feet of statues. The clatter of the tunnel had meanwhile died down into the usual swift, rhythmic round of wheels in the open air; and they separated.

They stood there side by side in front of the window, hand in hand, peering into the darkness of the night. "Look," said Giulia at last, in her normal voice, "look over there . . . What can it be? A house on fire?"

There was indeed a fire, like a shining red flower

the middle of the dark pane of glass. "I daresay it is," said Marcello, and lowered the window. As the mirror-like brightness of the glass was withdrawn from the outside darkness, the cool wind of the train's motion blew into his face, but the red flower remained, hanging mysteriously in the blackness of night, whether far or near, high or low, it was impossible to tell. Then, after staring for some time at the four or five petals of fire that seemed to be moving and throbbing, he turned his eyes to the bank beside the railway, along which the feeble lights of the train were running, together with his own and Giulia's shadows. Suddenly he was conscious of a sensation of acute bewilderment. Why was he in this train? And who was the woman standing beside him? And where was he going? And who indeed was he? And where had he come from? He did not suffer as a result of this bewilderment; on the contrary, it was pleasing to him as a feeling already familiar which perhaps also constituted the very background of his most intimate being. "I'm just like that fire over there in the darkness," he thought coldly. "I shall flare up and then die down again without reason and without result . . . just a little piece of destruction hanging in the blackness of night."

He started at Giulia's voice informing him, "Look, they've evidently made up our beds," and he realized that, while he himself had been lost in contemplation of that distant fire, for her there remained simply the question of their love; or rather, to be more exact, the approaching union of their two bodies. She was concerned, in fact, with what she was doing at the moment and nothing else. She had already walked off, not without a kind of repressed impatience, toward their compartment and Marcello followed some distance behind her. He paused a moment in the doorway to allow the conductor to come out, and then went in. Giulia was standing in front of the mirror and, regardless of the door being still open, was taking off her blouse, unbuttoning it from the bottom to the top. Without turning round, she said to him: "You take the top berth, and I'll have the bottom one."

Marcello closed the door, climbed up into his berth and immediately started undressing, putting his clothes in the

as he went. Naked, he sat waiting on the berth as claspings his knees. He heard Giulia moving, a tinkling sound of a tumbler in its metal holder, of a shoe falling on the carpet, and other noises, with a dry click, the bright electric lights, leaving only the purplish glimmer of the night. Giulia's voice said, "Are you coming?" Marcellino, turning his legs over the edge, twisted round, put on the lower berth and bent sideways to get into it. When he did this, he saw Giulia lying naked on her back, her arms across her eyes, her legs spread out. In the dim, diffusive light her body seemed of a cold, mother-of-pearl whiteness, with dark patches at the groin and under the arms and a dull pink at the breast; and she appeared so, not only because of this deathly pallor but because of her relaxed and utter stillness. But as Marcellino looked at her, all at once she shook herself with a violent start, like the spring of a closing trap and pulled him toward her, throwing her arms round his neck, opening her legs, and springing her feet behind his back. Later, she threw herself away and curled up against the wall, all huddled together with her forehead against her knees. And Marcellino, sitting beside her, understood that that which she had given him, with such frantic passion, from his body, which she had enclosed and preserved so jealously in her womb, no longer belonged to him, but would grow and develop in her. And this, he thought, he had done, he had been able to say, once at any rate, "I have loved like all other men . . . I have loved, I have united myself with a woman and have begotten another being."

CHAPTER 9

As soon as he thought Giulia had fallen asleep, Marcellino got out of bed and started dressing. The room was in a fresh, transparent half-light that gave a faint

lendid brilliance of June over sky and sea. It was a typical Riviera hotel room, high, white, with blue plaster decorations in the form of flowers and stalks and leaves, light-colored wooden furniture in the same floral style as the plasterwork, and, in one corner, a big green palm. When he was dressed, he tiptoed to the window, pushed the shutters slightly apart and looked out. There was the wide, smiling expanse of the sea, made vaster by the perfect clearness of the violet-blue horizon that seemed, as a faint breeze passed over it, to be lit up, wave after wave, by a tiny sparkling flower of sunlight. Marcello lowered his eyes from the sea to the promenade. It was deserted; no one was sitting on the benches in the shade of the palm trees facing the sea, no one was walking along the gray, clean asphalt. He examined this view for some time, then closed the shutters again and turned to look at Giulia as she lay on the bed. She was naked and asleep. The position of her body as she lay on her side brought into prominence the pale, ample roundness of her hip, from which the upper part of her body seemed to hang limp and lifeless, like the stem of a wilting plant from a vase. The back and hips, as Marcello knew, were the only firm, solid part of that body; on the farther side of it, invisible to him now but present to his memory, was the softness of her belly, flowing over, in tender folds, on to the bed, and of her breasts, dragged down by their weight, one over the other. Her head, hidden by her shoulder, could not be seen; and Marcello, remembering that he had possessed his wife a few minutes before, had the feeling that he was looking not at a real person but at a machine made of flesh, beautiful and lovable but brutal, made for love and for nothing else. As if his pitiless stare had waked her, she suddenly stirred and sighed deeply, and then said, in a clear voice, "Marcello." He stepped quickly to her side, answering affectionately, "Here I am." She turned over, transferring from one side to the other her cumbrous weight of female flesh, lifted her arms blindly and clasped them round his hips. Then, with her hair falling over her face, she slowly, tenaciously, rubbed her nose and mouth against him, seeking his groin. She kissed him there, with a kind of humble, pas-

sionate fetishism, paused a moment, motionless, her arms still around him, then fell back on the bed, overcome by sleep, her hair covering her face. And now she was asleep again, in the same position as before, except that she had changed from her right to her left side. Marcello took his coat from its peg, tiptoed to the door and went out into the passage.

He went down the wide, echoing staircase and through the door of the hotel on to the promenade. For a moment he was dazzled by the sunlight reflected in the flashing points from the surface of the sea. He closed his eyes, and then, as though his senses had been revived from darkness, he was struck by a sharp smell of horse-urine. There was a row of three or four cabs there, standing in a patch of shade behind the hotel, white covers on the seats, their drivers asleep on the box. Marcello went to the first of them and jumped in, calling out the address: "Via dei Glicini." He noticed that the driver threw him a quick, meaningful glance before, without speaking a word, he whipped up his horse.

The cab bowled along the sea front for some distance and then turned into a short street of villas and gardens. At the far end of the street rose the first of the Ligurian hills, luminous, vine-decked, with gray olive trees here and there, and a few tall red houses with green window frames standing on the slope. The street led straight toward the flank of the hill; pavements and asphalt came to a sudden end, giving place to a sort of grassy track. The cab stopped and Marcello looked up. He saw, set back in a garden, a gray, three-floored house with a black-slate roof and mansard windows. The cabman said duly, "This is it," took his money and hurriedly turned his horse. Marcello thought that he was offended at having had to bring him to this place; but perhaps, he reflected, perhaps when he opened the gate, he was attributing to him the repugnance that he himself felt.

He walked up the path between two dusty leafy hedges, toward a door set with panes of colored glass. He had always hated such places and had never entered one except for two or three times in his youth, coming each time, with a feeling of disgust and

though at something unworthy he ought not to have done. Feeling sick at heart, he went up the two or three steps, pushed open the glass door, letting loose a jingling mechanism of bells, and found himself in a Pompeian hall, facing a staircase with a wooden banister. He recognized the sickly smell of face powder, sweat and semen. The house was immersed in silence and summer afternoon torpor. As he was looking around, there appeared from somewhere or other a sort of maidservant, dressed in black with a white apron tied round her waist. She was small and slim, and her sharp, ferret-like face was enlivened by two brilliant eyes. She came towards him with a shrill "Good-day" uttered in the gayest of tones. "I want to speak to the proprietress," he said, taking off his hat with perhaps excessive politeness. "All right, pretty boy, you shall speak to her," replied the woman, speaking in the local dialect; "but in the meantime you'd better go into the drawing room . . . The proprietress will come to you . . . Go in there." Marcello, irritated both by her familiar way of speaking to him and by the misunderstanding, nevertheless allowed himself to be pushed towards a half open door. He saw, in an uneven half-light, a long, rectangular, empty room, with a row of red-upholstered divans all round the walls. The floor was dusty, like that of a station waiting room; the worn and dirty stuff of the divans, too, suggested the dreariness of a public place within the intimacy and secrecy of a private house. Marcello, uncertain what to do, sat down on one of the divans. At the same moment—like the sudden unburdening of bowels long unmoved—he could hear through the house a sort of disintegration, a pattering sound, the precipitate rush of feet down the wooden staircase. And then the thing that he had feared happened. The door opened and the peevish voice of the maid announced, "Here are the young ladies . . . all for you."

Lazily, unwillingly they came in, some of them half-naked, some more or less dressed, two of them dark and three fair, three of middling height one decidedly small and one enormous. The latter came and sat down beside Marcello, flopping down on the divan with a sigh of exhausted satisfaction. At first he turned away his face,

then, fascinated, moved slightly round again and looked at her. She was truly enormous, pyramidal in shape, her hips broader than her waist, her waist broader than her shoulders and her shoulders broader than her head, the latter being extremely small, with a snub-nosed face and a tress of black hair twisted round her forehead. A yellow silk brassiere supported her low, swelling breasts; below her navel a red skirt hung wide open like the curtain of a theatre, displaying the dark groin and the massive white thighs. Seeing that she was being looked at, she smiled suggestively to one of her companions who was sitting against the opposite wall, heaved a sigh, and then passed her hand between her legs as though to pull them apart into a less hot position. Marcello, offended by this idle immodesty, would have liked to pull away the hand with which she was rubbing herself underneath her belly; but he had not the energy to move. The thing that struck him most in these female cattle was the irreparable quality of their degradation. It was the same thing that made him shudder with horror in face of his mother's nudity and his father's madness, and was at the source of his almost hysterical love of order, quietness, tidiness, composure. The woman turned to him and said in a benevolent, jocular tone, "Well, don't you like your harem?" . . . Have you made up your mind?"—and immediately, in an impulse of frantic disgust, he got up and ran out of the room, followed by a burst of laughter and some obscene remarks in dialect. Furious, he went toward the staircase, thinking that he would go up to the floor above and search for the proprietress, but at that moment there was another peal from the front doorbell, and when he turned he saw, standing on the threshold, the astonished and—to his eyes, in his present embarrassment—almost paternal figure of the Secret Service agent, Orlando.

"Good day, sir . . . But where are you going, sir?" the latter exclaimed quickly, "you mustn't go upstairs."

"As a matter of fact," said Marcello, pausing and becoming calm again immediately, "I think they married me for a client . . ."

"Stupid women," said Orlando, shaking his head.

"Come with me, sir . . . I'll show you the way . . . You're expected, sir."

He preceded Marcello through the glass door and into the garden. One behind the other, they walked down the path between the hedges and turned round behind the house. The sun was scorching in this part of the garden, with a dry, sharp heat of dust and vegetation run wild. Marcello noticed that all the shutters of the villa were closed, just as though it were uninhabited; and the garden, too, was full of weeds and appeared to be abandoned. The Secret Service man was now making for a low, white building that took up the whole of the far end of the garden. Marcello remembered having noticed little houses like this, at the bottoms of gardens behind villas of this kind in other watering places. In summer the owners would let the villa and retire into them, restricting themselves to a couple of rooms in order to make money. Orlando opened the door without knocking and stuck his head in, announcing, "Here is Doctor Clerici."

Marcello walked forward and found himself in a small room fitted up, in a summary sort of way, as an office. The air was thick with smoke. A man was sitting at the table, his hands joined and his face turned toward him. The man was an albino. His face had the glowing, rosy transparency of alabaster, and was flecked with yellow freckles. His blue eyes, inflamed and almost red, with white lashes, were like those of certain wild animals that live among the polar snows. Accustomed as Marcello was to the disconcerting contrast between the dull bureaucratic style and the often ferocious tasks of many of his Secret Service colleagues, he could not help saying to himself that this man, at any rate, was perfectly suited to his position. There was more than cruelty in that spectral countenance—a kind of ruthless fury, almost, that was yet kept within bounds by the conventional rigidity of his military bearing. After a moment of embarrassing immobility, the man rose brusquely to his feet, revealing the shortness of his stature. "My name is Gabrio," he said. Then he immediately sat down and went on in an ironical tone, "So here you are, at last, Doctor Clerici."

His voice was metallic and disagreeable. Marcello, with-

out waiting to be asked, also sat down and said, "Yes, arrived this morning."

"I did, in fact, expect you this morning."

Marcello hesitated. Should he tell him that he was on his honeymoon? He decided not to, and concluded quickly, "It wasn't possible for me to come earlier."

"So I see," said the man. He pushed the box of cigarettes toward Marcello with an ungracious "Do you smoke?" then lowered his head and started reading a sheet of paper lying on the table. "They leave me here, in this house which may be hospitable but isn't in the least secret, without information, without directives, practically without money . . . ah, here it is." He went on reading for some time, then raised his head and added, "They told you in Rome to come and see me, didn't they?"

"Yes, the same man that brought me here just now came and notified me that I was to break my journey here and come and see you."

"Yes, exactly." Gabrio took the cigarette from his mouth and put it carefully down on the edge of the ash tray. "At the last moment, it appears, they changed the minds . . . The program is altered."

Marcello did not blink an eyelid; but a wave of indefinable relief and hope rushed over him exhilaratingly. Perhaps he would now be allowed to simplify his journey to reduce it to its ostensible motives of Paris and a honeymoon. He said, however, in a clear voice, "What does that mean?"

"It means that the plan is modified and, consequently, your mission also," continued Gabrio. "This man Quadri was to have been watched, you were to have got in touch with him, gained his confidence, even got him to entrust you with some commission or other . . . Now in my last communication from Rome, Quadri is specified as a troublesome person, to be suppressed." Gabrio took up his cigarette again, inhaled a mouthful of smoke, and replaced it in the ash tray. "In fact," he explained, in a more conversational tone, "your mission is reduced to practically nothing . . . All you have to do is to get in touch with Quadri, availing yourself of the fact that you know him already, and then point him out to this man

Orlando, who will also be going to Paris . . . You can invite him, for instance, to some public place where Orlando will also be—a café, a restaurant . . . All that's needed is for Orlando to see him with you, to make certain of his identity . . . That's all that's asked of you now . . . Then you can devote yourself to your honeymoon exactly as you like."

So Gabrio too knew about his honeymoon, thought Marcello, astonished. But this first thought, he at once realized, was nothing but a hastily assumed mask by means of which his mind sought to conceal from itself its own agitation. In reality Gabrio had revealed to him something more important than knowledge of his honeymoon—the decision to suppress Quadri. With a violent effort he forced himself to make an objective examination of this extraordinary, this lamentable piece of news. And he immediately established, in his own mind, one fundamental fact. In order to suppress Quadri, his own presence in Paris, his own co-operation, were not in any way necessary. Orlando could perfectly well find and identify his victim by himself. The truth of the matter was, he thought, that they wanted to involve him in an effective, though unnecessary complicity, to compromise him utterly, once and for all. As for the alteration in the plan, there was not the slightest doubt but that it was merely apparent. The plan just propounded by Gabrio had of course been already decided on and worked out in all its details at the time of his visit to the Ministry; and the apparent alteration had been due to a characteristic desire to divide and confuse responsibility. Neither he nor, probably, Gabrio, had received written orders; thus, in case of unfavorable developments, the Ministry would be able to proclaim its own innocence; and the blame for the murder would fall on him, on Gabrio, on Orlando, and on the other immediate participants.

He hesitated, and then, to gain time, objected, "I can't see that Orlando has any need of me in order to find Quadri . . . I think he's actually in the telephone book."

"Those are the orders," said Gabrio with almost breathless haste, as if he had foreseen Marcello's objection.

Marcello lowered his head. He realized that he had

en enticed into a kind of trap, and that, having put out
e finger, he was now, through a subterfuge, caught by
e whole arm; but, strangely, once the first shock of
rprise was over, he found that he felt no real repug-
ance at the change of plan—nothing more, in fact, than
an obstinate, melancholy resignation in the face of a duty
which, though it increases in unpleasantness, yet remains
unchanged and unavoidable. Probably the Secret Service
gent Orlando had no knowledge of the inside mecha-
nism of this duty, but he himself had—and that was all the
difference between them. Neither he nor Orlando could
evade what Gabrio called "orders," that were in fact per-
sonal situations that had now been firmly established,
outside which, for both of them, lay nothing but disorder
and irregularity. At last he looked up and said, "All right
then . . . And where am I to find Orlando, in Paris?"

Gabrio looked down at the same sheet of paper on the
table, and replied, "You tell me where you'll be staying
. . . then Orlando will come and see you."

So, they did not quite trust him, and anyhow did not
consider it opportune to give him the man's address in
Paris. He mentioned the name of the hotel where he
would be staying, and Gabrio made a note of it at the
bottom of the paper. He went on, in a more affable tone,
as though to indicate that the official part of the visit was
over, "Have you ever been to Paris?"

"No, this is the first time."

"I was there for two years before I ended up in this hole
here," said Gabrio with characteristic bureaucratic bit-
terness. "Once you've been in Paris even Rome seems like
a village . . . And imagine a place like this!" He lit a
cigarette from the butt of the other, and added, with
empty boastfulness, "In Paris I was in clover . . . A flat,
a car, lots of friends, affairs with women . . . As far as
that goes, you know, Paris is ideal."

Marcello, though it went against the grain, felt that he
ought to respond to Gabrio's affability in some way. So he
said, "But with this house here, just across the way, you
shouldn't be bored."

Gabrio shook his head. "Pooh, how could one think of
amusing oneself with these lumps of meat for only ten con-

scripts, at so much a pound? . . . No," he added, "one's only resource here is the Casino . . . D'you gamble?"

"No, never."

"It's interesting, all the same," said Gabrio, pulling himself back in his chair, as though to indicate that the interview was finished. "Fortune may smile upon anyone, on you just as much as on me. . . It's not for nothing that she's a woman. . . The important thing is to grab hold of her when you can." He rose, went to the door and threw it open. He was indeed very small, Marcello observed, with short legs; the upper part of his body was stiffly enclosed in a green jacket of military cut. Gabrio stood there for a moment looking at Marcello, in a ray of sunlight that seemed to accentuate the transparency of his pink, glowing skin; then he said, "I don't suppose we shall meet again. . . On your return from Paris you'll be going straight back to Rome."

"Yes, almost certainly."

"Is there anything you need?" Gabrio asked, suddenly and unwillingly. "Have they provided you with funds? . . . I haven't much with me here . . . but if you need anything. . ."

"No thanks, I don't need anything."

"Well, good luck, then—and into the lion's mouth!"

They shook hands and Gabrio hastily closed the door. Marcello walked away toward the gate.

But as he was going down the path, he realized that, in his hurried flight from the drawing room, he had left his hat there. He hesitated, loth to go back into that room that stank of shoes and face powder and sweat, and fearing, besides, the jests and the flattery of the women. Then he made up his mind, turned back and pushed open the door, letting loose the usual tinkle of bells.

This time nobody appeared, neither the ferret-faced maid nor any of the girls. But, through the open door of the big room, he heard the well-known, loud, good-natured voice of Orlando; and, feeling encouraged, he looked into the room.

It was empty, except for Orlando, who was sitting in the corner by the door beside a woman whom Marcello did not remember having noticed among those who had ap-

peared at his first entry. The Secret Service man had his arm round her waist, in an awkward, confidential attitude, and he did not trouble to change his position to Marcello's appearance. Embarrassed, vaguely irritated, the latter turned away his eyes from Orlando and looked at the woman.

She was sitting in a rigid attitude, as though she was in some way to repel her companion, or at least to keep him at a distance. She was dark, with a high, white forehead, bright eyes, a long, thin face and a large mouth, enlivened by dark-colored lipstick and she wore a serious expression. She was dressed in an almost normal manner in a white evening dress, low at the neck and sleeves, whose only meretricious device was that the skirt was almost up to the waist so as to display her belly and crossed legs, long, slim and elegant, with a chaste beauty like the legs of a dancer. She held a lighted cigarette between two fingers but she was not smoking: her hand rested on the arm of the sofa and the smoke rose into the air. Her other hand lay quietly on Orlando's knee, as might as well have been lying, thought Marcello, on the faithful head of a large dog. But what struck him most forcibly about her was her forehead, and not so much its whiteness as its appearance of being illumined in a mysterious way by the intense expression of the eyes, with a purity of light that made him think of one of those facets of diamonds that women used to wear, on great occasions, at balls. Marcello continued to gaze at her for some time in astonishment, and as he gazed he was conscious of a painful, indescribable feeling of regret and disappointment. Meanwhile Orlando, intimidated by this persistent stare, had risen to his feet.

"My hat," said Marcello. The woman had remained seated, and was now, in turn, gazing at him, but with curiosity. Orlando hurried assiduously across the room to fetch the hat from a divan on the far side. And then, suddenly, Marcello understood why it was that the sight of the woman had aroused in him that painful feeling of regret. The truth, he realized, was that he did not want to do what Orlando desired, and seeing her submit to an embrace had made him suffer, though

g some intolerable profanation. Of course she knew thing of the light that shone on her brow—which in y case did not belong to her any more than beauty; in neral, is the property of a beautiful person. Yet he felt almost his duty to prevent her demeaning that shining ow in order to satisfy the erotic caprices of Orlando. or one moment it occurred to him to make use of his uthority in order to get her out of the room. He would ngage her in conversation for a short time, and then, as oon as he could be sure that Orlando had chosen another woman, he would go away. He also had the crazy idea of arrying her away from the brothel and giving her the chance of another sort of life. But, even as he had these thoughts, he realized that they were foolish fancies. It was impossible that she should not be like her companions, like them irreparably and, as it were, innocently ruined and lost. Then he felt a touch on his arm; Orlando was in the act of handing him his hat. Automatically he took it.

But Orlando had had time to reflect on that curious stare of Marcello's. He stepped forward, and, pointing to the woman in much the same way as he might have pointed out something in the way of food or drink to an honored guest, made a suggestion to him. "If you wish, sir, if you like this woman . . . I can wait."

At first Marcello did not understand. Then he saw the smile on Orlando's face, at the same time both respectful and knowing, and felt himself blushing up to the ears. So Orlando was not retiring, he was merely yielding first place to him, from politeness as a friend as well as from discipline as an inferior—just as he might at a bar or a buffet table. Marcello said hurriedly, "You're crazy, Orlando . . . You do just as you like, I must go."

"Very well, sir," said Orlando with a smile. Marcello saw him beckon to the woman, and to his distress saw her rise at once, obedient to the signal, and—tall, erect, the diadem of light on her brow—walk over to him without hesitation or protest, with perfect professional simplicity. Orlando said to Marcello, "We shall meet again soon, sir," and he stepped aside to allow the woman to pass. Marcello, almost in spite of himself, drew back; and she

walked between them, in a leisurely way, cigarette in fingers. But when she was in front of Marcello she stopped for an instant and said: "If you want me, my name is Luisa." Her voice, as he had feared, was coarse and harsh without any gentleness in it; and Luisa thought it necessary to follow up her words with a gesture supposed to be flattering, putting out her tongue and licking her upper lip. Marcello felt that words and gesture relieved him, to a certain extent, of his regret at having failed to prevent her going off with Orlando. The woman, meanwhile, still leading the way, had reached the staircase. She threw her cigarette on the floor, stamped it out, and, raising her skirt with both hands, started quickly up the stairs, closely followed by Orlando. Finally they disappeared round the corner of the landing above. Somebody else—probably another of the girls and a client—was now coming down the stairs. Marcello could hear their chatter. Hurriedly he left the house.

CHAPTER 10

HAVING asked the hotel porter to get Quadri's number on the telephone, Marcello went and sat down in a corner of the lounge. It was a big hotel and the lounge was very spacious, with arches supported on pillars, groups of armchairs, showcases in which expensive objects were displayed, writing-desks and tables. Numbers of people were coming and going between the entrance and the elevator, the porter's desk and the manager's office, the door of the restaurant and the other public rooms beyond the pillars. Marcello would have liked to amuse himself, as he waited, with the spectacle of this gay, swarming lounge, but his mind, dragged down to the depths of memory by his present distress, turned back, almost against his will, to the first and only visit that he had paid there years before. Marcello had been a student and Quadri his tutor; and he had

in an old red building not far from the station in Rome, to consult him about a thesis for his doctor's degree. The moment he entered, Marcello had been struck by the enormous quantity of books piled up in every corner of the flat. Even in the hall he had noticed old curtains that appeared to conceal doors. But when he pulled them aside he had discovered rows and rows of books in recesses in the walls. The maid had led him down an extremely long and tortuous passage that seemed to go round the courtyard of the building, and the passage was lined on both sides with shelves of books and papers. When he was shown into Quadri's study, Marcello had found himself in a room whose four walls were closely packed with books, from floor to ceiling. There were more books on the desk, arranged one on top of the other in two neat piles between which the bearded face of the professor peeped out as though through a loophole.

Marcello had at once noticed that Quadri had a curiously flat, asymmetrical face, like a papier-mâché mask with red-rimmed eyes and a triangular nose to the lower part of which a beard and a pair of false mustaches have been stuck on in a summary manner. On his forehead, too, his hair, too black and with a look of dampness, gave the impression of a badly fitting wig. Between his brush-like mustache and his broomlike beard, both of them of a suspect blackness, one caught a glimpse of a very red mouth with lips of no particular shape. And Marcello had been forced to the conclusion that all this badly-distributed hair probably concealed some kind of deformity, such as a lack of chin or a frightful scar. It was a face that had nothing real or reliable about it, a face in which everything was false, a veritable mask. The professor had risen to welcome Marcello, and, in doing so, had revealed the shortness of his stature and the hump—or rather the malformation of the left shoulder—that added a certain distressing quality to his excessively gentle and affectionate manners. As he shook Marcello's hand between the piles of books, Quadri had looked at his visitor in a short-sighted way over his thick lenses, so that Marcello had had a momentary impression that he was being examined not by two, but by four eyes. He had also noticed the antiquat-

d style of Quadri's clothes—a sort of frock coat, black with silk facings, black striped trousers, a white shirt with starched collar and cuffs, a gold watchchain across his waistcoat. Marcello had no liking for Quadri: he knew him to be an anti-Fascist, and Quadri's anti-fascism, his unwarlike, unhealthy, unattractive appearance, his learning, his books, everything about him went to make up in Marcello's mind the conventional picture, continually pointed at in scorn by Party propaganda, of the negative, impotent intellectual. And, in addition, Quadri's extraordinary gentleness was repugnant to Marcello, who felt there must be something false about it: it seemed to him impossible that a man could be so gentle without deceitfulness and without ulterior motives.

Quadri had welcomed Marcello with his customary expressions of exaggerated affection. There were constant interjections of such phrases as "My boy," or "My dear boy," as he waved his little white hands about over the books; and he had begun by asking a quantity of questions about Marcello's family and about himself personally. When he heard that Marcello's father was shut up in a clinic for the insane, he had exclaimed, "Oh, my poor boy, I didn't know . . . What a misfortune, what a terrible misfortune! . . . And can science do nothing to restore his reason?" But he had not listened to Marcello's reply and had passed straight on to another subject. He had a throaty voice, modulated and harmonious, extremely sweet and full of anxious apprehensiveness. Marcello had discerned through this languishing yet marked anxiety—like a watermark in a transparent piece of paper—a complete indifference. Quadri, far from taking any real interest in him, perhaps did not even see him. Marcello had been struck, too, by the absence of shades of meaning or variety of tone in Quadri's conversation. He continued to speak the whole time with the same uniformly affectionate, sentimental accent whether he was dealing with matters that demanded this tone or that did not demand it at all. Quadri, 2 string of questions, had inquired, finally, Marcello was a Fascist; and, receiving an answer, he had explained in an almost casual

changing his tone or showing any apparent reaction, how difficult it was for him, whose anti-Fascist feelings were so well known, to continue the teaching of such subjects as philosophy and history under a regime like that of the Fascists. At this point Marcello, in embarrassment, had tried to bring the conversation round to the object of his visit. But Quadri had immediately interrupted him. "Perhaps you will wonder why in the world I am telling you all these things. . . My dear boy, I am not talking idly nor to relieve my own personal feelings. . . I would not allow myself to waste the time that you ought to be devoting to your studies. . . I am telling you these things in order to justify, in some way, the fact that I am unable to concern myself either with you or with your thesis: I am giving up teaching."

"You're giving up teaching?" Marcello had repeated in surprise.

"Yes," Quadri had confirmed, passing his hand with a habitual gesture over his mouth and mustache. "Although it is a grief, a great grief, to me, since I have devoted my whole life to you young men, I find myself forced to resign my position." After a moment, without emphasis, the professor had added with a sigh, "Yes, yes, I have made up my mind to pass from thought to action. . . The phrase, perhaps, will not seem new to you, but it reflects my situation exactly."

Marcello had with difficulty refrained from smiling. Indeed he seemed to him a comic figure, this Professor Quadri, this little man in a frock coat, hunchbacked, short sighted, bearded, peering out at him from his arm-chair, between his piles of books, and declaring that he had made up his mind to pass from thought to action. There was, however, no doubt as to the meaning of his remark. Quadri, after years of passive opposition, shut up in his own thoughts and his own profession, had decided to go over to active politics, perhaps to active plotting. Marcello, seized with a sudden, vehement dislike for him, had not been able to help warning him, in a cold, menacing manner, "You're making a mistake in telling me this. . . I am a Fascist and I must hurt you."

But Quadri, speaking with a gentleness, in an

intimate sort of way, had answered, "I know you are a good boy, a fine, honest boy, and that you'd do nothing like that."

"Devil take him," Marcello had thought and he had answered, with perfect sincerity, "I might do it. . . That's exactly what honesty means—reporting people like you and making it possible for them to do any harm."

The professor had shaken his head. "My dear boy," he had said, "you know, even while you're speaking what you say isn't true. . . You know it, or your heart knows it. . . And in point of fact you, honest man that you are, took the step of warning me of another—you know what he would have done, the former?—he would have pretended to approve of what I said, and then, once I had compromised myself by that thoroughly imprudent statement, he would have taken advantage of me. . . But you warned me."

"I warned you," Marcello had replied harshly. "I don't believe you're capable of what you call honesty. Why can't you be satisfied with being a professor? What action are you talking about?"

"What action? . . . Never mind," Quadri had answered, with a sly but intent look. Marcello, by his words, could not resist looking around at the vast shelves full of books. Quadri had caught this glance, still in the gentlest possible way, had added, "It is strange to you, doesn't it, that I should be talking about action? . . . Among all these books? . . . At the very least you're thinking, 'What sort of action is he talking about, this little twisted, myopic, bearded hunchback? . . . Now, truthfully, isn't that what you're looking for? . . . Your little Party newspapers have so often told you the man who is both ignorant and incapable of taking action, the intellectual, and you can't help looking at him with pity when you recognize him in me. . . So?"

Surprised at such penetration, Marcello had asked, "How did you come to guess that?"

"Oh, my dear boy," Quadri had replied, smiling, "my dear boy, I guessed it at once. . . But"

was convinced that Quadri, among so many qualities, lacked that of courage. This seemed to be proved by the fact that, although he thrust his followers into mortal dangers, he never, personally, exposed himself.

He was aroused with a start from these thoughts by the voice of one of the hotel pages who crossed the lounge rapidly, calling out his name. For a moment, deceived by the page's French pronunciation, he almost thought it must be someone else's name. But this "Monsieur Clerici" was, of course, himself—as he realized, with a slight feeling of nausea, when, pretending to himself that he really thought it was someone else, he tried to imagine what that person was like, a person with *his* face, *his* figure, *his* clothes. In the meantime the page was going away in the direction of the writing room, still calling his name. Marcello got up and went straight to the telephone booth.

He took up the receiver from the shelf and put it to his ear. A female voice, clear and slightly singsong, asked in French who was telephoning. Marcello answered, in the same language, "I'm an Italian. . . Clerici, Marcello Clerici. . . I should like to speak to Professor Quadri."

"He's very busy. . . I don't know if he can come. . . Did you say your name was Clerici?"

"Yes, Clerici."

"Wait one moment."

He heard the sound of the receiver being put down on the table, then footsteps receding, and finally there was silence. Marcello waited for some time, expecting a further sound of footsteps to announce the woman's return or the arrival of the professor. Instead of which, springing without warning from the depth of that utter silence, came the echoing voice of Quadri, "Hullo, Quadri here. . . Who's speaking?"

Marcello hastily explained: "My name is Marcello Clerici. . . . I was a student of yours, when you were teaching in Rome. . . I should like to see you."

"Clerici," repeated Quadri doubtfully. And then, after a moment, with decision, "Clerici: I don't know the name."

"Yes, you do, Professor," Marcello insisted. "I came to

to act, it doesn't mean that you have to have a gold eagle on your cap or braid on your sleeves. . . Well, good-bye, anyhow, good-bye, good-bye and good luck. . . Good-bye." With these words, gently, implacably, he had pushed Marcello toward the door.

And now Marcello, thinking over that meeting, realized that there had been a strong element of youthful impatience and inexperience in his rash contempt for the runchbacked, bearded, pedantic Quadri. Besides, his mistake had been proved by what had happened. Quadri, a few months after their interview, had fled to Paris and had soon become one of the principal anti-Fascist leaders—perhaps the cleverest, the most wily, the most aggressive of all. His specialty, it seemed, was proselytism. Benefiting by his teaching experience and his knowledge of the youthful mind, he was often successful in converting young men who were indifferent, or even of contrary opinions, and then urging them to bold and dangerous undertakings which were almost always disastrous, if not to him, inspirer, at any rate to their artless executants. He did not appear, however, as he flung these initiates into conspiratorial struggle, to feel any of the humane anxieties that, in view of his character, one might have been tempted to expect of him. On the contrary, he sacrificed them quite coolly in desperate actions that could be justified only as part of an extremely long-term plan and that, indeed, necessarily involved a cruel indifference to the value of human life. Quadri, in fact, possessed some of the rare qualities of the true politician—or at least of a certain category of politicians; he was astute and at the same time enthusiastic, intellectual yet active, frank yet cynical, thoughtful yet imprudent. Marcello, as part of his official work, had often been concerned with Quadri, who was described in police reports as an extremely dangerous element, and he had always been struck by his capacity for combining so many contrasting qualities in one single character, profound and ambiguous as it was. And thus, gradually, from what he had managed to learn at a distance and from information that was not always exact, he had changed his former contempt for an angry respect. His original dislike, however, stood firm: for he

"Yes, of course, Orlando. . . You say where."

"You don't know Paris, sir . . . so I suggest place that's easy to find. . . The café at the corner of the Place de la Madeleine. . . Don't make a mistake—on the left as you come from the Rue Royale. . . It has lots of tables outside, but I'll be waiting for you inside. . . There won't be anyone inside."

"All right . . . what time?"

"I'm at the café already. . . But I'll wait as long as you like."

"In half an hour, then."

"That's fine, sir. . . In half an hour."

Marcello left the telephone booth and walked toward the elevator. But, just as he was going in, he heard, for the third time, the same page calling out his name. This time he was really surprised. He felt a vague hope that this might be some superhuman intervention, that, as he put his ear to the black receiver of the telephone, he might hear the voice of an oracle uttering some decisive word about his life. His heart in a flutter, he turned and went back to the telephone booth.

"Is that you, Marcello?" asked the languid, caressing voice of his wife.

"Oh, it's you!" he could not help exclaiming—whether with disappointment or relief, he could not have said.

"Yes, of course it is. . . Who did you think it was?"

"It doesn't matter. . . I was expecting a telephone call. . ."

"What are you doing?" she asked, with an accent of melting tenderness.

"Nothing. . . I was just on the point of coming up to tell you I'm going out, and that I would be back in about an hour."

"No, don't come up. . . I'm just going to have a bath. . . All right then, I'll expect you in an hour's time, down in the lounge."

"It might be an hour and a half, even."

"All right, an hour and a half, then. . . But please don't be longer."

"I said that so as not to keep you waiting . . . it'll probably be an hour."

see you a few days before you gave up teaching. . . I wanted to discuss a subject for a thesis with you."

"One moment, Clerici," said Quadri. "Really I don't remember your name . . . but that doesn't mean you may not be right. . . And you want to see me?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"For no particular reason," replied Marcello; "but, as I was your pupil and as I've heard a good deal about you recently—I just wanted to see you, that's all."

"Well," said Quadri in a more yielding tone, "come and see me here at my flat."

"When can I come?"

"Today, if you like. . . In the afternoon . . . after lunch. . . Come and have some coffee . . . about three o'clock."

"I must tell you," put in Marcello, "I'm on my honeymoon . . . May I bring my wife?"

"But of course, naturally. . . Till later, then."

He rang off, and Marcello too, after a moment's reflection, replaced the receiver. Before he had had time to leave the telephone booth, the same page who had called out his name in the lounge reappeared and said, "You're wanted on the telephone."

"I've had my call already," said Marcello, starting to leave.

"No, someone else wants you."

He went back into the booth and took up the receiver again. A loud voice, good-natured and cheerful, immediately shouted into his ear, "Is that you, Doctor Clerici?"

Marcello recognized the voice of the Secret Service agent Orlando, and replied calmly, "Yes, it's me."

"Did you have a good journey, sir?"

"Yes, excellent."

"Is the Signora well?"

"Very well."

"And what d'you think of Paris?"

"I haven't been outside the hotel yet," answered Marcello, slightly annoyed with this familiarity.

"Well, you'll see. . . Paris is Paris. . . Are we going to meet, sir?"

"Yes, of course, Orlando. . . You say where."

"You don't know Paris, sir . . . so I suggest place that is easy to find. . . The café at the corner of the Place de la Madeleine. . . Don't make a mistake—on the left as you come from the Rue Royale. . . It has lots of tables outside, but I'll be waiting for you inside. . . There won't be anyone inside."

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"Oh, it's you!" he could not help exclaiming—when, with disappointment or relief, he could not have said.

"Yes, of course it is. . . Who did you think it was?"

"It doesn't matter. . . I was expecting a telephone call. . ."

"What are you doing?" she asked, with an appealing tenderness.

"Nothing. . . I was just on the point of coming to tell you I'm going out, and that I would be back in an hour."

"No, don't come up. . . I'm just going to have a little rest. . . All right then, I'll expect you in an hour down in the lounge."

"It might be an hour and a half, you know."

"All right, an hour and a half, then. . . But don't be longer."

"I said that as an hour is long, you're waiting, probably for an hour."

as it were, the invisible, swarming presence of the immense city lying beneath its vault. He looked down at the river: sunk between its sloping stone walls, with the clean quays along its sides. It looked, at this point, like a canal; the water, oily and sluggish, of a muddy green color, ringed the white piers of the nearest bridge with sparkling whirlpools. A black and yellow barge slipped swiftly, foamlessly, over the thick water, its funnel belching hasty puffs of smoke; in the bows two men were talking—one wearing a blue blouse, the other a white sleeve-est. A fat, familiar sparrow perched on the parapet beside his arm, chirped in a lively manner as if to tell him something, then flew off again in the direction of the river. A young man who might have been a student, dressed, with a beret on his head and a book under his arm, attracted his attention. He was going in the direction of Notre Dame, in a leisurely way, stopping now and then to look at the books and the prints. When he saw him, Marcello was struck by his own thoughts. In spite of all obligations that oppressed him, he had never been that young man, he thought. And suddenly, the sky, the trees, the whole of Paris would take on a different meaning for him. At the same moment he saw an empty taxi coming slowly along the boulevard and was almost surprised to find himself signaling it to stop: one moment earlier he had not thought of doing anything. He jumped in, giving the address of the hotel where Orlando was awaiting him.

Sliding back on the cushions, he looked out at the streets of Paris as the taxi carried him along. He noticed a new look of the city—gray, old, but nevertheless smiling and graceful and full of an intelligent charm that seemed to blow in at the windows together with the breeze of the taxi's motion. He liked the *gendarmes* at the crossroads, though he could not have said why. They seemed to him elegant, with their hard, round kepis, their short cloaks, their slim legs. One of them came to the window to say something to the driver. He was an energetic-looking, pale, fair young man, and he held his hat between his teeth, while still keeping his arm, his white baton, stretched out behind him to hold

up the traffic. He liked the big horse chestnut trees that raised their branches toward the glistening window-panes of the old gray façades. He liked the old-fashioned shop signs with their white lettering, full of flourishes, on a brown or wine-red background. He liked even the unaesthetic pattern of the taxis and buses with hoods that looked like the muzzles of dogs running along sniffing the ground. The taxi, after a short halt, passed in front of the neo-classic temple of the Chamber of Deputies, crossed the bridge, and rushed at full speed towards the obelisk in the Place de la Concorde. This, then, he thought as he looked at the immense military-looking square, enclosed at the far side of its row of arcades like regiments of soldiers drawn up on parade, this, then, was the capital of France, of that France that had to be destroyed. He felt now that he had loved this city that lay before his eyes for a long time—long before that day, when he found himself there for the first time. And yet this admiration that he felt for the majestic, kindly, joyous beauty of the town emphasized to him the somber nature of the duty he was preparing to perform. Perhaps if Paris had been less beautiful, he thought, he might have evaded that duty, he might have escaped, have freed himself from the bonds of fate. But the beauty of the city established him firmly in his hostile, negative role—as did the many repugnant aspects of the cause he was serving. He realized, as he thought over these things, that he had found a way of explaining to himself the absurdity of his own position. And he knew that he explained it in that way because there was no other way of explaining it and so of accepting it freely and consciously.

The taxi stopped and Marcello got out in front of the café appointed by Orlando. The rows of tables on the pavement were crowded, as he had warned him they would be; but when he went inside the café, he found it deserted. Orlando was sitting at a table in a recess formed by a window. As soon as he saw him, he rose and beckoned to him.

Marcello walked across without hurrying and sat down opposite him. Through the window he could see the

backs of the people sitting outside in the shade of trees, and beyond, part of the colonnade and of the angular pediment of the church of the Madeleine. Marcello ordered coffee. Orlando waited till the waiter gone away, and then said, "Perhaps you're thinking that you'll get an 'espresso' coffee the same as in Italy, you're quite wrong. . . . Good coffee doesn't exist in Paris, as it does with us. . . You'll see what sort of a coffee they'll bring you, sir."

Orlando spoke in his usual respectful, good-natured quiet tone. "An honest face," thought Marcello, eyeing the Secret Service man closely while the latter, with a scowl, poured himself out some more of the despised coffee. "the face of a bailiff or a tenant farmer or a small country landowner." He waited till Orlando had drunk his coffee and then asked, "Where do you come from, Orlando?"

"Me? From the province of Palermo, sir."

Marcello, for no particular reason, had always thought that Orlando was a native of Central Italy, of Umbria or the Marches. Now, looking at him more closely, he thought that he had been deceived by the solid, countrified look of his figure. But his face held no trace of Umbrian roughness or of the placidity of the Marches. It was, indeed, an honest, good-natured face, but the eyes, black and deep-set with a tired look in them, had a certain feminine, almost Oriental gravity about them that did not belong to the parts of the country; nor was there mildness and placidity in the smile on the wide, lipless mouth beneath the snail-shaped nose. "I should never have thought it," he murmured.

"Where did you think I came from?" asked Orlando almost eagerly.

"From Central Italy."

Orlando seemed to be reflecting for a moment; then, frankly but respectfully, he said, "You too, sir—I think you've got the usual prejudice."

"What prejudice?"

"The prejudice against
in particular a

admit it, sir, but it is so." Orlando shook his head sorrowfully.

Marcello protested. "Truly I wasn't thinking about that at all. . . I thought you came from Central Italy because of your physical appearance."

But Orlando was not listening. "I'll tell you what it is: it's like water dripping," he went on emphatically, obviously pleased with the unusual expression. "In the street, in the house, everywhere, even on duty . . . colleagues of ours from the North come and find fault even with our spaghetti. . . . My answer to them is, 'In the first place you've now taken to eating spaghetti yourselves—and even more than we do'; and then I say, 'How good your polenta is! . . .'"

Marcello said nothing. In reality he was not all displeased that Orlando should be talking about things that had nothing to do with his mission. It was a way of avoiding familiarity on a terrible subject to which it was quite unsuited. All at once Orlando burst out, "Sicily—what an amount of slander there is about Sicily! . . . The Mafia, for instance . . . You know the kind of thing they say about the Mafia . . . For them, there's not a single Sicilian who's not a member of it . . . Quite apart from the fact that they know absolutely nothing about the Mafia!"

"The Mafia doesn't exist any more," said Marcello.

"Of course not, it doesn't exist any more," said Orlando, with an air of not being altogether convinced. "But, sir, if it did still exist, believe me, it would be far better, infinitely better, than the same sort of affairs in the north—the Teppisti at Milan, the Barabba at Turin . . . They're nothing but a lot of bums, people who live on women, petty thieves and bullies . . . The Mafia was at any rate a school for courage."

"Excuse me, Orlando," said Marcello coldly, "but I must ask you to explain to me exactly how the Mafia came to be a 'school for courage.'"

Orlando appeared to be disconcerted by this question, not so much because of the almost official coldness of tone in which Marcello spoke as because of the complicated nature of the subject, that did not allow of an im-

mediate and exhaustive reply. "Well, sir," he said with a sigh, "you ask me a question which it isn't easy to answer . . . In Sicily, courage is the first quality of a man of honor, and the Mafia considers itself an honorable society . . . How can I explain? It's difficult for anyone who hasn't been there and seen things with his own eyes to understand. Imagine, sir, some sort of place—a bar, a café, an inn, a restaurant—in which a group of men meet together, men who were armed and hostile to some member of the Mafia. . . . Well, what would he have done? He wouldn't have asked for police protection, he wouldn't have left the neighborhood . . . No: he would have come out of his house, dressed in his best new clothes, freshly shaved, and would have made his appearance at that place, alone and unarmed, and would have spoken only the two or three words that were needed or wanted . . . And then, what do you think? Every single person—the group of his enemies, as well as his friends, and the whole village—all had their eyes on him . . . And he knew that . . . He also knew that it was all up with him if he showed he was afraid, either by not looking people straight in the eye, or by not speaking quite calmly, or by an expression on his face that was not completely serene . . . And so his whole attention was given to facing this examination—with a resolute look in his eye, a quiet voice, measured movements, and a normal color . . . Easier said than done. You have to find yourself in that position to understand how difficult these things are. . . . And that's what I mean, sir—just to give you an example—by the Mafia school for courage."

Orlando, who had become excited while he was speaking, now cast a cool, inquiring glance at Marcello's face, as much as to say, "But it's not about the Mafia that we two should be talking, if I'm not mistaken." Marcello noticed his look and glanced ostentatiously at his wrist watch. "We'd better talk about our own affairs now, Orlando," he said with authority. "I'm meeting Professor Quadri today . . . According to my instructions, I am to point out the professor to you in such a way that you can make quite certain of his identity . . . That's my part, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I shall invite Professor Quadri to dine with me or meet me in a café this evening . . . I can't yet say where . . . But if you telephone me at the hotel about seven o'clock this evening I shall know the place . . . As for Professor Quadri, let's decide now how I'm to point him out to you . . . Let's say, for instance, that Professor Quadri will be the first person whose hand I'll shake when I come into the café or the restaurant. . . . is that all right?"

"That's understood, sir."

"And now I must go," said Marcello, again looking at his watch. He put the money for the coffee on the table, then rose and went out, followed at some distance by the Secret Service man.

As they stood on the pavement, Orlando's eyes scrutinized the dense traffic of the street in which two lines of cars were moving, almost at walking pace, in opposite directions, and he said, in an emphatic tone of voice, "Paris."

"It's not the first time you've been here, is it, Orlando?" Marcello asked as he searched among the other cars for an empty taxi.

"The first time?" said Orlando, with a sort of heavy vehemence. "Far from it . . . Now just have a guess, sir, at how many times I've been here."

"I really don't know."

"Twelve times," said the Secret Service man, "and this is the thirteenth."

A taxi-driver caught Marcello's eye and came and stopped in front of him. "Good-by then, Orlando," said Marcello as he got in. "I shall expect a telephone call from you this evening." Orlando raised his hand to show that he understood. Marcello got into the taxi, giving the address of the hotel.

But, as the taxi bore him along, the sound of those last words spoken by the Secret Service man, his "twelve" and "thirteen"—"twelve times in Paris and this is the thirteenth"—seemed to be prolonged in his ears and to wake far-off echoes in his memory. It was as though he had put his head into a cave and shouted, and then found

that his voice came echoing back to him from unexpected depths. Then, all of a sudden, reminded by the two numbers, he recalled that he had promised to point out Quadri by shaking hands with him and realized what it was that, instead of merely informing Orlando that Quadri was easily recognizable by the hump on his back, he had had recourse to this device. It was his remote childish memories of the sacred story that had made him forget the professor's deformity, so much more convenient for the purpose of safe identification than a handshake. Twelve was the number of the Apostles, and himself was the thirteenth, who, with a kiss, betrayed Christ to the soldiers who had come to the garden to arrest Him. The traditional figures of the Stations of the Cross, he had so often contemplated in churches, superimposed themselves now on the modern stage scenery, a French restaurant, with its set tables, its clients sitting at their food, himself rising and going to meet Quadri and taking his hand in his, and Orlando the Secret Service agent sitting apart and watching the pair of them. Then the figure of Judas, the thirteenth Apostle, became confused with his own, coalesced with its outlines, in fact *was* his own.

He was seized with an almost amused desire to speculate, to ponder, in face of this discovery. "Probably Judas did what he did for the same reasons that I'm doing for," he said to himself; "and he, too, had to do it, although he did not like doing it, because, after all, it was necessary that someone should do it . . . But I'm frightened? Let's admit frankly that I have a part of Judas . . . so what?"

He realized that he was, in fact, not in the least frightened. Even at the worst, he observed to himself, a tommy cold melancholy coming over him, that there was fundamentally nothing unpleasant about it. He had to think—not in order to justify himself but to have the comparison and to recognize its limits. He was, certainly, like him, but only up to a certain point. Up to the point of the handshake; or even perhaps, in some ways like—although he himself was not a disciple of Judas up to the betrayal, if understood in a widely generic sense.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I shall invite Professor Quadri to dine with me or meet me in a café this evening . . . I can't yet say where . . . But if you telephone me at the hotel about seven o'clock this evening I shall know the place . . . As for Professor Quadri, let's decide now how I'm to point him out to you . . . Let's say, for instance, that Professor Quadri will be the first person whose hand I'll shake when I come into the café or the restaurant. . . . is that all right?"

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He realized that he was, in fact, not in the least frightened. Even at the worst, he observed to himself, his customary cold melancholy coming over him, there was fundamentally nothing unpleasant about it. He went on to think—not in order to justify himself but to heighten the comparison and to recognize its limits—that Judas was, certainly, like him, but only up to a certain point. Up to the point of the handshake; or even perhaps, if you like—although he himself was not a disciple of Quadri up to the betrayal, if understood in a widely generic sense.

After that, everything was different. Judas hanged himself, or at any rate thought he could not avoid hanging himself, because the people who had suggested the betrayal and paid him for it did not then have the courage to support and justify him; but *he* would not kill himself nor give himself over to despair, because, behind him . . . he saw the crowds collected in the squares to applaud the man under whose command he served, and, implicitly, to justify him, the man who obeyed orders. His final thought was that he was receiving nothing, in the absolute sense, for what he was doing. No thirty pieces of silver for him. It was just a matter of duty, as Orlando would say. The analogy changed color and faded away, leaving behind nothing but a faint trace of proud, satisfying irony. If anything, he concluded, what mattered was that the comparison should have occurred to him, that he should have worked it out, and for a moment, found it just.

CHAPTER 11

AFTER luncheon, Giulia wanted to get back to the hotel to change her dress before they went to Quadri's. But as they got out of the elevator she put her arm around his waist and whispered, "It's not true that I wanted to change . . . I just wanted to be alone with you for a little." As he walked down the long, deserted corridor between two rows of closed doors, with that affectionate arm around his waist, Marcello could not help saying to himself that, whereas for him this honeymoon in Paris was also, and more particularly, a mission, for Giulia it was purely and simply a honeymoon. It therefore followed, he thought, that no deviation could be permitted to him from the role of bridegroom that he had accepted when he got into the train with her—even if sometimes, as was now the case, he had a feeling of anguish that was far removed from amorous excitement. But this was the

normality he had so eagerly longed for—this arm at his waist, these looks, these caresses; and the thing he was preparing to do in company with Orlando was nothing more than the blood-money paid for such normality. In the meantime they had reached their room. Giulia, without letting go of his waist, opened the door with the other hand and went in with him.

Once inside, she let go of him, turned the key in the lock and said, "Shut the shutter, will you?" Marcello went to the window and did so. As he turned he saw Giulia, standing by the bed, was already slipping her dress over her head; and he thought he understood what she had meant when she said, "I just wanted to be alone with you for a little." In silence he went and sat down on the edge of the bed, on the opposite side of Giulia. She was now in her underclothes and stockings. With her hands she placed her dress on a chair at the head of the bed, took off her shoes, and finally, with an awkward movement, lifting first one leg and then the other, lay down on her back, flat on her back, with one arm at the back of her neck. For a moment she was silent when she said, "Marcello."

"What is it?"

"Why don't you lie down here beside me?"

Obediently Marcello bent and took off his shoes. Then he lay down on the bed beside his wife. Giulia immediately moved close to him, pressing her body against his, and, full of concern, asked anxiously, "What's the matter with you?"

"With me? Nothing . . . Why?"

"I don't know, you seem so worried."

"That's an impression you often have," he answered. "You know that my normal state of mind isn't exactly thoughtless . . . but that doesn't mean that I'm worried."

She embraced him silently. Then she went on to say, "Wasn't true that I asked you to come here so that I could get ready . . . Nor was it true that I just wanted to be alone with you . . . It's something quite different."

This time Marcello was astonished and felt almost moroseful at having suspected her of a mere erotic

ing. Looking down at her, he saw that the eyes with which she gazed up at him were filled with tears. Affectionately, yet not without a touch of irritation, he said to her, "Now it's *my* turn to ask what's the matter with *you*."

"You're quite right," she replied. And immediately she began weeping, with silent sobs whose convulsions he could feel against his own body. Marcello waited a little, in the hope that this incomprehensible weeping would stop. But it appeared, on the other hand, to be redoubled in intensity. He asked then, staring up at the ceiling, "Won't you tell me what you're crying about?"

Giulia went on sobbing for a little and then answered, "For no reason at all . . . Because I'm a fool"; and there was already a faint note of comfort in her woebegone voice.

Marcello looked towards her and repeated, "Come on . . . tell me what you're crying about."

Giulia turned her eyes to his, and though they were still filled with tears the light of hope seemed to be reflected in them; and then she smiled faintly and put out her hand and took the handkerchief from his pocket. She wiped her eyes, blew her nose, put the handkerchief back in his pocket and then, embracing him again, whispered, "If I tell you why I was crying, you'll think I'm crazy."

"Never mind," he said, caressing her, "tell me."

"Well, it was like this," she said. "At lunch time I saw you were so absent-minded—so worried-looking, even—that I thought you'd already had enough of me and were regretting you had married me . . . I thought perhaps it was because of what I told you in the train—you know, about that lawyer—and that perhaps you'd realized you'd done a stupid thing, you, with the future you have in front of you, and with your intelligence and your goodness as well, in marrying an unfortunate girl like me . . . And so, when I thought this, I also thought I'd take the first step . . . that I'd go away without saying anything to you, so as to save you an embarrassing good-bye . . . So I decided, as soon as we go back to the hotel, to pack up and go . . . to go straight back to Italy and leave you in Paris."

"I can't believe you're being serious," said Marcella, astonished.

"Perfectly serious," she continued, smiling, and startled by his surprise. "In fact, while we were down in the hall and you went away for a moment to buy cigarettes, I went to the head porter and asked him to engage me a berth in the Rome sleeping car for tomorrow . . . You see, I was quite serious."

"But you're crazy," said Marcella, raising his voice in spite of himself.

"I told you," she answered, "that you'd think I was crazy . . . But at that moment I was certain, absolutely certain, that I'd be doing the best thing for you by leaving you and going away . . . Yes, I was as certain as I am certain now," she added, pulling herself up and touching his lips lightly with hers, "that I'm giving you this."

"But why were you so certain?" asked Marcella, disturbed.

"I don't know . . . never mind . . . There are things one is certain of . . . without any particular reason."

"And then," he could not help exclaiming, as though he felt some remote twinge of regret, "why did you choose your mind?"

"Why? Goodness knows! . . . Perhaps it was because you looked at me in the elevator in a certain way—any rate I had the impression that you looked at me in a certain way . . . But then I remembered that I'd decided to go away and that I'd engaged a sleeping berth, and thinking that now it was too late to turn back, I started to cry . . ."

Marcella said nothing. Guilia interpreted his silence her own way, and asked him, "You're annoyed, aren't you? . . . You're annoyed about the sleeping berth? But they'll cancel it all right . . . One only has to pay twenty per cent."

"Don't be absurd," he answered slowly, as though he were thinking deeply.

"Well then," she said, stifling an incredulous laugh which, however, there was still a slight tremor of— "then you're annoyed because I didn't really go."

"More absurdities," he replied. But this time he felt he was not being entirely sincere. So, as if to suppress any ultimate hesitation, any last regret, he added, "If you had gone away, my whole life would have collapsed." And this time it seemed to him that he had told the truth, even if in an ambiguous manner. Would it not perhaps be a good thing if his life—that life that he had built up from the starting-point of the Lino affair—did really collapse entirely, instead of overloading itself with more burdens and more obligations, like some ridiculous building to which an infatuated owner goes on adding towers and turrets and balconies till finally he endangers its solidity? He felt Giulia's arms enfold him even more closely, in an amorous embrace; and then heard her whisper, "Do you really mean that?"

"Yes," he answered, "I really mean it."

"But what would you have done," she insisted, with a sort of self-satisfied, almost conceited curiosity, "if I had really left you and gone away? . . . Would you have run after me?"

He hesitated before answering, and again he seemed to hear in his own voice an echo of that distant regret. "No, I don't think so . . . Haven't I told you already that my whole life would have collapsed?"

"Would you have stayed in France?"

"Yes, possibly."

"And what about your career? Would you have let that go to pieces?"

"Without you, it wouldn't have had any meaning," he explained calmly. "I do what I'm doing because of you."

"But what *would* you have done, then?" She seemed to be finding some cruel kind of pleasure in imagining him alone, without her.

"I should have done what they all do, the people who leave their own country and their own professions for reasons of this kind. I should have adapted myself to some sort of a job—as a scullion, or a sailor, or a chauffeur . . . or I should have enlisted in the Foreign Legion . . . But why are you so anxious to know?"

"Well . . . it's interesting . . . In the Foreign Legion . . . Under another name?"

"Probably."

"Where is the Foreign Legion stationed?"

"In Morocco, I believe . . . and in other places too."

"In Morocco . . . However, I didn't go away," she murmured, pressing herself against him with greedy, jealous violence. Silence followed these words. Giulia did not move, and Marcello, as he looked at her, saw that she had closed her eyes. She appeared to be asleep. So he, too, closed his eyes, feeling that he would like to sleep. But he could not, although he felt prostrated with a deadly weariness and langour. He was conscious of a deep and painful feeling, as of a rebellion of his whole being; and a strange smile kept recurring in his mind. He was like a wire, simply a human wire through which flowed, ceaselessly, an electric current of terrifying energy whose refusal or acceptance did not depend on him. A wire like those high-tension cables on pylons bearing the notice: "Beware: Danger." He was simply one of those conductor-wires, and sometimes the current hummed through his body without troubling him, infusing, in fact, an increased measure of vitality into him. But at other times—as, for instance, now—seeming to be too strong, too intense; and then he longed to be, not a taut, vibrating wire, but one that had been pulled down and left to rust on a pile of rubbish in some factory yard. Why, in any case, should he have to endure this transmission of current, when so many others were not even touched by it? And again, why was there never any interruption of the current, why did it never, for one single moment, cease to flow through him? The smile diverged and branched out into questions that had no answer; and all the time his painful, aching languor increased, clouding his mind, dimming the mirror of his consciousness. At last he dozed off, and it seemed to him that sleep had in some way interrupted the current and that he was really, for once, a piece of broken-off, rusty wire thrown into a corner with other refuse. But at the same moment he felt a hand touch his arm. He jumped up into a sitting position and saw Giulia standing beside the bed, fully dressed and with her hat on. She said in a low voice, "Are you asleep? Oughtn't we to be going to Quadri's?"

curiosity—Giulia was stretching her neck in order to observe the other woman, whom, owing to her own half-recumbent position, she could see only imperfectly. At last, without moving, Lina said in a low voice, "You don't mind my staying like this for a little?"

"No, but soon I must get dressed."

After a moment's silence Lina went on, as though resuming an earlier conversation, "How silly you are, though. . . What would it matter to you? . . . Why, you yourself said that if you weren't married you'd have nothing against it."

"Perhaps I said that," Giulia replied almost coquettishly, "so as not to offend you. . . Besides, I *am* married."

Marcello, watching, saw that Lina, while she was speaking, had taken one arm from around Giulia's legs and was moving her hand slowly, tenaciously upward along her thigh, pushing back the edge of the towel as it went. "Married!" she said, with intense sarcasm, and without interrupting her slow approach, "and who to, my God!"

"I like him," said Giulia. Lina's hand, hesitating, insinuating as the head of a snake, now moved from Giulia's hip to her naked groin. But Giulia took hold of it by the wrist and guided it firmly downward again, adding in an indulgent tone, like a governess scolding a restless child, "Don't imagine that I don't see you."

Lina took Giulia's hand and began slowly, thoughtfully kissing it, now and then rubbing her whole face violently against the palm, like a dog. "Little silly!" she breathed, with intense tenderness.

A long silence followed. The concentrated passion that emanated from every one of Lina's movements contrasted in a singular manner with Giulia's vagueness and indifference. The latter no longer appeared to be even curious; and though she abandoned her hand to Lina's kisses and rubbings, she was looking around the room as if searching for some excuse. At last she withdrew her hand and started to get up, saying, "Now I really must get dressed."

Lina leaped nimbly to her feet, exclaiming, "Don't move. . . Just tell me where the things are. . . I'll dress you."

Standing there, with her back to the door, she hid Giu-

completely. Marcello heard his wife's voice say with laugh, "You want to be my maid too, do you?" "Why should you mind? . . . It doesn't make any difference to you . . . and it gives me so much pleasure." "No, I'll dress myself." Out of Lina's fully-dressed figure, as though by duplication, issued Giulia, completely naked. She passed on tiptoe in front of Marcello's eyes and disappeared at the far end of the room. Then he heard her voice saying, "Please don't look at me . . . turn the other way. . . You make me feel embarrassed." "Embarrassed with me? . . . But I'm a woman, too." "Yes, in a sort of way you're a woman . . . but you look at me as if you were a man." "Well, you might as well say frankly that you'd rather went away."

"No, stay, but don't look at me."

"I'm not looking at you . . . you silly, why d'you think I should want to look at you?"

"Don't get angry. . . What I mean is that, if you hadn't spoken to me in that way before, I shouldn't now be embarrassed and you could look at me as much as you liked." This was said in a half-stifled voice which seemed to come from inside a dress that she was slipping over her head.

"Don't you want me to help you?"

"Oh my goodness, if you really want to so much. . ."

Determined yet lacking assurance in her movements, hesitating though aggressive, filled with fervor and at the same time humiliated, Lina moved forward, was outlined for a moment in front of Marcello, and then disappeared in the direction of that part of the room whence Giulia's voice came. There was a moment's silence and then Giulia, in an impatient but not hostile tone, exclaimed, "Ugh, how tiresome you are!" Lina said nothing. The light of the lamp fell on the empty bed, showing the hollow place left by Giulia's hips in the damp towel. Marcello left the crack in the door and went back to the corridor.

By the time he had taken a few steps he realized that his surprise and agitation had led him, quite unconsciously, to perform a significant act: automatically he had pushed between his fingers the gardenia given him

man and destined by him for Lina. He dropped the
wer on the carpet and made his way to the staircase.
He went down to the ground floor and out into the
street, in the deceptive, hazy dimness of twilight. The
lamps were already lit—white clusters on distant bridges,
yellow lamps in pairs on vehicles, the red rectangles of
windows; and night was rising like a somber cloud of
smoke to the clear green sky from behind the black out-
line of roofs and spires on the opposite bank of the river.
Larcello went over to the parapet and leaned his elbows
on it, looking down at the darkened Seine whirling along
in its black flood strings of jewels and circlets of dia-
monds. The feeling he was now experiencing was nearer
to the deathly quiet that follows disaster than to the tu-
mult of disaster itself. He knew that, for a few hours
during that afternoon, he had believed in love; now he
realized that he was revolving in a topsy-turvy, sterile
world in which real love did not occur, but merely sensual
relationships, from the most natural and ordinary to the
most abnormal and unusual. Certainly the feeling that
Lina had had for him had not been love: no more was
Lina's feeling for Giulia. Love did not enter into his own
relations with his wife; and perhaps even Giulia, indul-
gent as she was, and tempted, almost, as she had been, by
Lina's advances, did not love him with a real love. In this
obscure and reeling world, like a stormy twilight, these
ambiguous figures of men-women and women-men whose
ambiguity, when they met, was mingled and redoubled,
seemed to hint at some meaning which in itself was also
ambiguous, but which was bound up, nevertheless—so it
appeared to him—with his own destiny and with impossi-
bility, already proved, of escaping it. Since there was no
love, and simply because of that, he would continue to be
what he had hitherto been, would carry his mission to
completion, would persist in his intention to create a fam-
ily with Giulia—Giulia the animal, Giulia the unforesee-
able. This was normality, this makeshift, this empty form.
Outside it, all was confusion and caprice.

He felt himself driven to act in this way owing, also, to
the light now thrown on Lina's behavior. She despised
him, and probably hated him too, as she had declared she

did when she was still being sincere; but in order not to sever their relationship and so preclude the possibility of seeing Giulia, to whom she had been attracted, she had contrived to simulate a feeling of love for him. Marcello realized now that from her, henceforward, he could expect neither understanding nor pity; and in face of this final, irremediable hostility, armored, as it was, with sensual abnormality, with political aversion and with moral contempt, he had a feeling of acute and helpless pain. And so that light in her eyes and on her brow, that light so pure, so intelligent, that had fascinated him, would never be directed on him, to illuminate and soothe him with its affection. Lina would always prefer to humiliate and degrade it in flattery, in entreaty, in hellish embraces. He recalled, at this point, how when he saw her press her face against Giulia's knees, he had been smitten with the same sense of profanation that he had felt in the house at S., when he saw the prostitute Luisa submitting to the embrace of Orlando. Giulia was not Orlando, he thought, but he had desired that that brow should not be humble before anyone; and he had been disappointed.

As he stood there thinking, night had fallen. Marcello straightened himself up and turned toward the hotel. He was just in time to catch sight of the white figure of Lina coming out of the door and hurrying to a car parked on the pavement. He was struck by her contented and almost furtive air, like that of a weasel or a stoat slinking away from a hen coop with its prey in its mouth. It was not the attitude of one who had been repulsed, he thought: quite the opposite. Perhaps Lina had managed to extract some promise from Giulia; or perhaps Giulia, out of weariness or sensual passivity, had gone so far as to permit some caress or other, valueless to herself, indulgent as she was both to herself and to others, but very precious to Lina. In the meantime Lina had opened the door of the car and had got into it, sitting down sideways and then pulling in her legs. Marcello saw her go past, holding high in profile, her beautiful, proud, delicate face, her hand on the wheel. The car vanished in the distance and he went back into the hotel.

He went up to their room and

ing. The room was all in order, and Giulia was sitting, fully dressed in front of the dressing table, finishing her hair. Without turning she asked quietly, "Is that you?"

"Yes, it's me," answered Marcello, sitting down on the bed.

He waited a moment and then asked, "Did you enjoy yourself?"

Immediately, vivaciously, his wife turned half around from the table and replied, "Yes, very much indeed. . . We saw such a lot of lovely things and I left my heart behind in at least ten different shops."

Marcello said nothing. Giulia finished doing her hair in silence, then rose and came and sat beside him on the bed. She was wearing a black dress with a wide, ornate *décolletage* that revealed the firm, brown curves of her breasts like two fine fruits in a basket. A scarlet artificial rose was fastened at her shoulder. Her gentle, youthful face with its big smiling eyes and its full mouth wore its usual expression of sensual gaiety. In a smile that was perhaps unconscious Giulia showed, between her brightly painted lips, her regular teeth of brilliant, spotless whiteness. She took his hand affectionately, and said, "Now just imagine what happened to me."

"What?"

"This lady, Professor Quadri's wife. . . Well, just fancy . . . she's not a normal woman."

"What d'you mean?"

"She's one of those women who love other women . . . and in fact, just imagine, she's fallen in love with me . . . just like that . . . at first sight. . . She told me after you'd gone away. . . That's why she insisted so much on my staying and resting at her flat. . . She made me a regular, proper declaration of love. . . Whoever could have thought it?"

"And you—what did you do?"

"I wasn't expecting it at all. . . I was just dropping off to sleep, because I really was tired. . . At first I hardly understood. . . Then at last I did understand, and I really didn't know how to take it. . . You see, it was real, raging passion, just like a man. . . Tell me truthfully,

would you ever have expected that, from a woman like her, so self-controlled, so very self-possessed?"

"No," answered Marcello gently, "I shouldn't have expected it . . . any more than I should expect," he added, "that you would reciprocate such effusions."

"Good heavens, are you by any chance jealous?" she exclaimed, bursting into a delighted, joyous laugh, "jealous of a woman? Even supposing I'd paid any attention to her, you oughtn't to be jealous. . . A woman isn't a man. . . . But you can reassure yourself . . . practically nothing happened between us."

"*Practically* nothing?"

"I said practically," she replied in a reticent tone, "because, when I saw she was in such despair, I did allow her to squeeze my hand while she was bringing me to the hotel in her car."

"Only just to squeeze your hand?"

"But you *are* jealous," she exclaimed again, highly delighted. "You really are jealous. . . I've never seen you like that before. . . Well, if you really want to know," she went on after a moment, "I also allowed her to give me a kiss . . . but only like one sister to another. . . Then, as she went on insisting and I got bored, I sent her away. . . That was all. . . Now, tell me, are you still jealous?"

Marcello had prolonged the conversation about Lina mainly in order to furnish himself with yet another proof of the difference between himself and his wife—he whose whole life was upset because of a thing that had never happened, and she who was open to every sort of experience, indulgent, forgetful in the flesh even more quickly than in the spirit. He asked gently, "But you yourself, in the past, have you never had any relationship of that kind?"

"No, never," she answered with decision. This curt tone was so unusual in her that Marcello knew at once that she was lying. "Come on," he insisted; "why lie about it? . . . No one who knew nothing about these things would have behaved as you did with Signora Qua . . . truth."

"But what does it matter to you?"

"It interests me to know."

Giulia sat silent for a moment, with downcast eyes, and then said slowly, "You see, the business with that man, that lawyer. . . . Until the day I met you it had given me a real horror of men. . . . Well, I had a friendship, but it didn't last long . . . with a girl, a student she was, of my own age. . . . She was really fond of me, and it was mainly that affection of hers, at a moment when I needed it badly, that persuaded me. . . . Then she became possessive, exacting and jealous, and so I broke it all off. . . . I still see her occasionally in Rome, in one place or another. . . . Poor dear, she's still very fond of me." Her face, after a moment of reticence and embarrassment, had now resumed its customary placid expression. Taking his hand, she added, "Don't worry, and don't be jealous; you know I don't love anyone except you."

"Yes, I know," said Marcello. He remembered Giulia's tears in the sleeping car, and her attempt at suicide, and knew that she was sincere. From a conventional point of view she had looked on her lost virginity as a betrayal of trust, but she attached no real importance to her past errors.

"But I tell you," Giulia was saying, "that woman really is crazy. . . . D'you know what she wants us to do? She wants us all to go a few days from now to Savoy, where they have a house. . . . In fact, just fancy, she's already worked out a program."

"What program?"

"Her husband leaves tomorrow. She is staying a few days more in Paris. . . . She says it's on business of her own, but I'm convinced it's really for me she's staying. . . . Then she proposes we should all leave together and go and spend a week with them in the mountains. . . . The fact that we're on our honeymoon doesn't seem to enter her head. . . . For her, it's just as though you didn't exist. . . . She wrote down the address of the house in Savoy for me, and made me swear I would persuade you to accept the invitation. . . ."

"What is the address?"

"There it is," said Giulia, pointing to a piece of paper

on the marble top of the bedside table, "but, good heavens, you don't really want to accept?"

"No, I don't, but perhaps you do?"

"For goodness' sake, d'you really think I take any notice of that woman? . . . I've told you already that I sent her away because she annoyed me with her persistence." Giulia had risen from the bed and, still talking, went out of the room. "By the way," she called from the bathroom, "someone telephoned for you about half an hour ago. . . It was a man's voice, an Italian. . . He wouldn't say who he was . . . but he left a number and said would you ring him as soon as you can. . . I put down the number on that same piece of paper."

Marcello took up the paper, pulled out a notebook from his pocket and carefully wrote down both the address of the Quadris' house in Savoy and Orlando's telephone number. He felt he had now come to himself again after the transient exaltation of the afternoon; and he perceived this, in particular, from the mechanical nature of his actions and from the resigned melancholy that accompanied them. It was all over then, he thought, putting the notebook back in his pocket, and that fleeting appearance of love in his life had been, after all, merely the shock of his life's adjustment into its final, settled form. He thought again for a moment of Lina, and seemed to discern an unmistakable sign of fate in her sudden passion for Giulia, which, while it had allowed him to find out the address of the house in Savoy, had at the same time brought it about that, when Orlando and his men presented themselves there, she would not yet have arrived. Quadri's solitary departure and Lina's remaining in Paris fitted perfectly, in fact, into the plan of his mission. If things had gone differently, it was not clear now he and Orlando could have brought it to a satisfactory conclusion.

He got up, called to his wife that he was going down to wait for her in the hall, and went out. There was a telephone booth at the end of the corridor, and he went to it in a leisurely, almost automatic, manner. It was by the sound of the Secret Service man's voice issuing from the receiver and asking him, in a jo-

where are we going to have this little dinner of ours?" that seemed to bring him out of the cloud of his own thoughts. Quite calmly, speaking slowly but clearly, he proceeded to inform Orlando of Quadri's journey.

CHAPTER 15

As THEY got out of the taxi in a narrow street in the Latin Quarter, Marcello looked up at the sign over the door. *Le Coq au Vin* was written in white letters on a brown background at the first floor level of an old gray house. They went into the restaurant. A red velvet divan ran all round the room; the tables were in a row in front of the divan; and old rectangular mirrors in gilt frames reflected in the quiet light the central chandelier and the heads of the few customers. Marcello saw Quadri sitting in a corner beside his wife. Dressed in black, and shorter than her by a whole head, he was looking over his spectacles at the menu. Lina, on the other hand, in a black velvet dress that emphasized the whiteness of her arms and breast and the pallor of her face, was sitting erect and motionless and seemed to be anxiously watching the door. She jumped to her feet when she saw Giulia, and behind her, almost hidden by her, the professor also rose. The two women shook hands. Marcello raised his eyes and saw, suspended in the unostentatious yellow light of one of the mirrors, an incredible apparition—the head of Orlando, gazing at them. At the same moment the restaurant clock came to life, its metal entrails began to writhe and moan, and finally it struck the hour. "Eight o'clock," he heard Lina exclaim in a contented tone; "How punctual you are!" Marcello shuddered, and, as the clock continued to strike its mournful, solemn-sounding notes, stretched out his hand to shake the hand that Quadri offered him. The clock struck its last note with energy, and then, as he pressed Quadri's palm against his own, he remembered that, according to agreement, it was this handshake that

was to point out the victim to Orlando, and suddenly was almost tempted to stoop and kiss Quadri on his left cheek, just as Judas had done, to whom he had jestingly compared himself that afternoon. He actually seemed to feel the rough contact of that cheek beneath his lips, and wondered at so strong a power of suggestion. Then he looked up again at the mirror; Orlando's head was still there, hanging in the void, staring at them. At last they sat down, Quadri and himself on chairs and the two women opposite them, on the divan.

The wine waiter arrived with his list, and Quadri began ordering the wines with extreme care. He seemed completely absorbed in this occupation and had a long discussion with the waiter about the quality of his wines, that he appeared to know very well. Finally he ordered a dry white wine to go with the fish, a red wine with the roast, and some champagne on ice. The wine waiter was succeeded by the other waiter, with whom the same scene was repeated: knowing discussions about various dishes, hesitations, reflections, questions, answers, and finally the ordering of three dishes, *hors d'oeuvres*, fish and meat. In the meantime Lina and Giulia conversed in low tones, and Marcello, his eyes fixed on Lina, had fallen into a kind of dream. He still seemed to hear the frantic striking of the clock behind him while he was shaking hands with Quadri, he seemed to see again the decapitated head of Orlando looking at him out of the mirror; and he knew that never, as at that moment, had he been so clearly confronted with his destiny. He was like a stone standing in the middle of a crossroad, with two roads, different but of equally decisive importance, leading away from him, one on each side. He started when he heard Quadri asking him, in his usual indifferent tone, "Been going around Paris?"

"Yes, a little."

"Like it?"

"Very much."

"Yes, it's a likeable place," said Quadri, as though speaking on his own account and almost making a concession to Marcello, "but I wish you'd give your attention to that point that I've already

...n't the vicious city, filled with corruption, that the newspapers in Italy talk about. . . I'm certain you have that idea, and it's an idea which doesn't correspond to reality."

"No, I haven't that idea," said Marcello, a little surprised.

"I'm astonished that you haven't," said the professor without looking at him, "all the young men of your generation have ideas of that kind. . . They think you can't be strong without being austere, and in order to feel austere they invent fantastic theories of an impossible kind."

"I don't think I'm particularly austere," said Marcello.

"I'm sure you are, and I'll prove it to you," said the professor. He waited till the waiter had put down the dishes of *hors d'oeuvres* and then went on. "Now. . . I bet that while I was ordering the wines you were secretly wondering that I could appreciate such things. . . Isn't that so?"

How had he guessed that? Marcello unwillingly admitted, "You may be right . . . but there's no harm in it. . . The reason why I thought so was that you yourself have what you call an austere look."

"But not like yours, my dear boy, not like yours," repeated the professor pleasantly. "But let me go on. . . Now tell me the truth—you don't like wine and you don't understand it."

"No, to tell the truth I hardly ever drink," said Marcello; "but what does that matter?"

"It matters a great deal," said Quadri quietly. "A very great deal. . . And I'm also willing to bet that you don't appreciate good food."

"I eat—" began Marcello.

"You eat in order to eat," finished the professor with an accent of triumph, "which is just what I meant. . . And finally I'm sure you have a prejudice against love-making. . . If, for instance, you see a couple kissing each other in a public park, your first impulse is one of condemnation and disgust, and in all probability you will infer that the city in which the park is situated is a shameless city. . . Isn't that so?"

Marcello understood now what Quadri was getting at.

He said, with an effort, "I don't infer anything. . . It's simply that I was probably not born with a taste for these things."

"It's not only that, but for you, those that do have such tastes are blameworthy and therefore to be despised. . . Admit that's what you feel."

"No, it's not that; they're different from me, that's all."

"He that is not with us is against us," said the professor, making a sudden sortie into politics. "That's one of the slogans that they love repeating, in Italy and in other places too, nowadays, isn't it?" He had meanwhile started eating, and with such gusto that his spectacles had got pushed out of place.

"It doesn't seem to me," said Marcello drily, "that politics have anything to do with these matters."

"Edmondo," said Lina.

"Yes, my dear?"

"You promised me we wouldn't talk about politics."

"But we're *not* talking about politics," said Quadri. "we're talking about Paris. . . In short," he concluded "since Paris is a city where people love to eat and drink to dance and kiss in the parks, in fact to amuse themselves—I'm sure your opinion of Paris can only be unfavorable."

This time Marcello said nothing. Giulia, with a smile answered for him: "Anyhow *I* like the people of Paris very much indeed. . . They're so gay."

"Well said, Signora," the professor approved; "you must try and cure your husband."

"But he's not ill."

"Yes, he is; he's ill with austerity," said the professor, his head bent over his plate. And he added, almost between his teeth, "Or rather, austerity is just a symptom."

It now seemed obvious to Marcello that the professor—who, according to what Lina had told him, knew all about him—was amusing himself by playing with him like a cat with a mouse. He could not help thinking that it was a very innocent game compared with his own somber one, which had been started that afternoon at the Quadri's flat and which was destined to finish bloodily at the villa in Savoy. With a sort of melancholy coquettishness he asked Lina, "Do I really seem

He saw her studying him with a cold, reluctant eye, in which he discerned, to his distress, the profound aversion which she cherished for him. Then, evidently, Lina decided to resume the role of amorous woman that she had taken it upon herself to play, for she replied, with a forced smile, "I don't know you well enough. . . You certainly give one the impression of being very serious."

"Ah, that's certainly true," said Giulia, looking affectionately at her husband. "I suppose I've seen him smile perhaps a dozen times. . . Serious is the word."

Lina was gazing fixedly at him now, with malicious intentness. "No," she said slowly, "no, I was wrong. . . Serious is *not* the word. . . Worried would be more correct."

"Worried about what?"

Marcello saw her shrug her shoulders, indifferently. "That, of course, I don't know." But, at the same moment, to his great surprise, he felt her foot, under the table, slowly and deliberately first touching his own lightly and then pressing it.

Then Quadri said in a kindly manner, "Clerici, don't worry too much about looking worried. . . It's nothing but talk, just to pass the time. . . You're on your honeymoon—that's the only thing that ought to worry you. . . Isn't that true, Signora?" He smiled at Giulia, with that smile of his which looked like a grimace caused by some mutilation; and Giulia smiled back at him, saying gaily, "Perhaps it's just that that's worrying him—isn't that so, Marcello?"

Lina still continued to press his foot with hers, and he experienced at this contact a sense of duplication—as though the ambiguity of his love-relationships had now been transferred to his whole life and there were two situations instead of only one: the first, in which he pointed out Quadri to Orlando and went back to Italy with Giulia, the second in which he saved Quadri, deserted Giulia, and stayed in Paris with Lina. The two situations, like two superimposed photographs, cut across each other and were confused by the varying colors of his feelings of regret and horror, of hope and of melancholy, of resignation and of revolt. He knew perfectly well that Lina was pressing his feet merely in order to deceive him and to

perform faithfully her role of the woman in love; and yet, absurd though it was, he almost hoped that this was not true and that she did seriously love him. He was wondering all the time why in the world she had chosen, out of so many possible ones, this particular method—so traditional and so common—of expressing sentimental understanding, and he seemed to find in that choice another sign of her settled contempt for him, as a person who did not require very much subtlety or inventiveness to deceive him. Meanwhile Lina, still pressing his foot and gazing at him with intention, was saying, "About this honeymoon of yours. . . I've already spoken to Giulia, but as I know Giulia won't have the courage to speak to you about it, I'm going to make the suggestion myself. . . Why don't you come and spend the last part of it in Savoy? . . . With us? . . . We shall be there the whole summer. . . We've got a lovely spare room. . . You could stay a week or ten days or as long as you like . . . and go straight back to Italy from there."

So, Marcello said to himself, almost disappointed, so that was the cause of the foot-pressing. It occurred to him again, this time with a touch of spite, how extremely well the invitation to Savoy fitted in with Orlando's plan: if they accepted the invitation, they would keep Lina in Paris and in the meantime Orlando would have plenty of time to deal with Quadri down there in the mountains. He said slowly, "Personally I've nothing against a jaunt to Savoy . . . but not for a week or so . . . not before we've seen Paris."

"But that's perfect," cried Lina at once, triumphantly; "you can come down there with me. . . My husband's going on tomorrow. . . I've got to stay another week in Paris too."

Marcello observed that her foot was no longer pressing against his. As the need that had inspired it ceased, so the flattery ceased also; and Lina had not even thought to thank him by a glance. From Lina his eyes moved to his wife, and he saw that she was looking displeased. Then she said, "I'm sorry I can't agree with my husband . . . and I'm sorry also if I seem . . . but it's impossible for u

"Why?" Marcello could not help exclaiming. "After Paris. . ."

"After Paris, as you know, we've got to go to the Côte d'Azur to join those friends of ours." This was a lie, for Lina had no friends on the Côte d'Azur. Marcello saw that Giulia was lying in order to get rid of Lina and at the same time to demonstrate to him her indifference to the other woman. But there was a danger that Lina, disgusted by Giulia's refusal, might leave with Quadri. It was necessary, therefore, to guard against this and to make his recalcitrant wife accept the invitation without more ado. He said hastily, "Oh, those people—we can give that up if necessary. . . We can see them at any time."

"The Côte d'Azur!—but how awful," exclaimed Lina, pleased at Marcello's siding with her. And she went on, in a gay, impetuous, singsong voice, "Whoever goes to the Côte d'Azur! . . . South American adventurers, *coquettes*. . ."

"Yes, but we promised to go," said Giulia obstinately.

Again Marcello felt Lina's foot pressing his own. With an effort, he said, "Come on, Giulia, why shouldn't we accept?"

"Well, if you really want to. . . ." she replied, bending her head.

He saw Lina, at these words, turn toward Giulia with a disturbed, sad, irritated, surprised look on her face. "But why?" she cried, with a kind of wondering consternation in her voice, "what is it? . . . Just that you want to see that horrible Côte d'Azur? . . . That's simply being provincial. . . Nobody but provincials wants to visit the Côte d'Azur. . . I assure you no one in your place would hesitate for a moment. . . Why!" she went on suddenly, with desperate vivacity, "there must be some reason that you're not telling us. . . Perhaps you've taken a dislike to my husband and me?"

Marcello could not but admire the violence of passion that permitted Lina to make what was, in effect, a lover's scene with Giulia in his own and Quadri's presence. Giulia, somewhat surprised, protested, "Please . . . really. . . What are you saying?"

Quadri, who was silently eating and appeared to be en-

joying his food rather than listening to the conversation, observed with his usual indifference, "Lina, you're embarrassing the lady. . . Even if she has taken a dislike to us, as you say, she'll never tell us so."

"Yes, you've taken a dislike to us," Lina went on, taking no notice of her husband, "or rather, perhaps it's *me* you've taken a dislike to. . . Is that so, my dear? . . . You've taken a dislike to me. . . One imagines," she went on, turning to Marcello and still speaking with that same desperate social vivacity which hinted at things it did not say, "One imagines that somebody likes one, and sometimes, instead, it's just the people one wants to be liked by who simply can't bear one. . . Now be truthful, my dear, and admit that you can't bear me. . . And while I'm talking like this and stupidly insisting that you should come and stay with us in Savoy, you're thing, 'What does this crazy woman want of me? How is it she doesn't realize that I can't endure her face, her voice, or her manners—her whole personality, in fact?' . . . Be truthful, admit that's just the kind of thing you're thinking at this very moment."

Now, thought Marcello, she had abandoned all prudence; and if it was perhaps possible for the husband to attribute no importance to these heart-wrung insinuations, he himself—for whose benefit, according to the pretence, all this insistence was being displayed—could hardly fail to realize for whom they were really intended. Giulia, mildly astonished, protested, "But what *are* you thinking about . . . I should really like to know why you think these things."

"So it's true," exclaimed the afflicted woman, "you *have* taken a dislike to me." Then, turning to her husband, she said, with febrile, bitter complacency, "You see, Edmondo, you said she wouldn't tell me. . . But now she *has* told me: she *has* taken a dislike to me."

"I didn't say that," said Giulia smiling; "I never even dreamed of such a thing. . ."

"You didn't say it but you *made it quite clear*," Quadri, without raising his eyes from his plate, said. "Lina, I don't understand why you go on arguing like this. . . Why should Signora *Clarici* have taken a dislike

to you? She's only known you for a few hours, and probably she hasn't any particular feeling about you."

Marcello saw that he would have to intervene again; Lina's eyes, angry and almost insulting in their look of scorn and imperiousness, demanded it of him. She was no longer pressing his foot now, but, with crazy imprudence, at a moment when he happened to place his hand on the table, she pretended to be taking some salt and gave his fingers a squeeze. He said, in a conciliating but decisive manner, "Giulia and I, on the contrary, both like you very much indeed . . . and we accept your invitation with pleasure. . . We'll certainly come—won't we, Giulia?"

"Yes, of course," said Giulia, suddenly surrendering; "it was only because of that engagement of ours. . . We really wanted to accept."

"Splendid . . . Then that's understood . . . We'll leave together in a week's time." Lina was radiant, and at once started to talk of the walks they would take in Savoy, of the beauty of that part of the country, of the house in which they would be staying. Marcello noticed, however, that she talked in a confused way, more in obedience, as it were, to an urge to sing—like a bird suddenly gladdened by a ray of sunshine inside its cage—than to the necessity of saying anything particular or giving any particular information. And, just as a bird gains vigor from its own singing, so did she appear to become intoxicated with the sound of her own voice, that trembled with the exultation of an imprudent, uncontrolled delight. Feeling himself excluded from the conversation between the two women, Marcello almost mechanically looked up at the mirror hanging at Quadri's back: the honest, good-natured face of Orlando was still there, suspended in the void, decapitated but alive. But it was no longer alone: beside it, in profile, no less precise and no less absurd, another head could now be seen, talking to the head of Orlando. It was the head of a bird of prey, but with nothing of the eagle about it; of a bird of prey of a poor, inferior species—with small, dull, deep-set eyes beneath a low forehead; a large, melancholy, beaky nose; hollow cheeks with the shadow of asceticism upon them; a small mouth; a shriveled chin. Marcello allowed his eyes to rest for some time upon this

face, wondering if he had seen it before; and he started when Quadri's voice asked him, "By the way, Clerici . . . If I asked a favor of you . . . would you grant it me?"

It was an unexpected question; and Marcello noted that Quadri had waited to ask it until his wife had at last stopped talking. "Certainly," he said, "if it's in my power."

It seemed to him that Quadri looked at his wife before he spoke, as if to have her corroboration of an agreement already discussed and arranged. "It's about the following matter," Quadri then said, in a tone of voice both gentle and cynical, "You are certainly not ignorant of my activities here in Paris and of the reason why I have never gone back to Italy . . . Now we have friends in Italy to whom we correspond as best we can . . . One of the methods we use is to entrust letters to people who have no concern with politics, or who anyhow are not suspected of carrying on any political activities . . . I thought perhaps you would take one of these letters to Italy for me . . . and post it at the first station you happen to come to—Turin, for instance."

There was a silence. Marcello now realized that Quadri's request had no other purpose than to put him to the test, or, at the least, to embarrass him; and he also noted that it was made by agreement with Lina. Probably Quadri, faithful to his system of persuasion, had convinced his wife of the expedience of this plan—though to such an extent as to modify her hostility towards Marcello. The latter thought he could guess this from her cold, drawn, almost irritated look on her face. But he could not, for the moment, perceive what other purpose Quadri could have in view. To gain time, he answered, "But if they find out, I shall end up in prison."

Quadri smiled and said, jokingly, "That wouldn't do any great harm . . . On the contrary, for us it would be quite a good thing . . . Don't you know that political movements require martyrs and victims?"

Lina frowned but said nothing. Giulia looked at Marcello anxiously. It was obvious that she wanted her husband to refuse. Marcello resumed, slowly, "In fact, I really almost want the letter to be discovered."

"No; not that," said the professor, pouring himself some wine in a playful, careless manner which, for some reason, almost made Marcello sorry for him. "What we want is that the greatest possible number of people should compromise themselves and fight on our side . . . Going to prison for our cause is only one of a very large number of ways of compromising oneself and joining in the struggle—certainly not the only one." He drank slowly; then went on, seriously and in an unexpected manner. "But I only asked you, so to speak, as a matter of form . . . I know you'll refuse."

"You guessed right," said Marcello, who had been weighing the pros and cons of the proposal. "I'm sorry, but I don't think I can do you this service."

"My husband isn't concerned with politics," explained Giulia with nervous solicitude, "he's a government official . . . he's outside all that."

"Yes, of course," said Quadri, with an air of indulgence, almost of affection; "of course; he's a government official."

It seemed to Marcello that Quadri was curiously satisfied at his reply. His wife, on the other hand, looked angry. She asked Giulia, in an aggressive tone: "Why are you so afraid of your husband being concerned with politics?"

"What's the use of it?" answered Giulia, with perfect naturalness; "He's got to think of his own future, not of politics."

"That's how the women in Italy argue," said Lina, turning to her husband, "and then you're surprised that things go as they do."

Giulia was annoyed. "Really, Italy has nothing to do with it . . . In certain circumstances the women of any country would argue in the same way . . . If you lived in Italy, you'd think as I do."

"Now, now, don't get angry," said Lina, with a gloomy but affectionate laugh, passing her hand, in a rapid caress, around Giulia's sulky face. "I was joking. . . You may be right . . . Anyhow you're so charming when you defend your husband and get angry on his behalf. . . Isn't it true, Edmondo, that she's charming?"

Quadri made a vague, slightly disgusted, sign of agreement, as much as to say, "women's talk," and then went on, seriously, "You're right, Signora . . . A man should never be placed in the position of having to choose between truth and bread."

The subject, it seemed to Marcello, was exhausted. Nevertheless he was still curious to know the real reason of the proposal. The waiter changed the plates and put a big dish of fruit on the table. Then the wine waiter came up and asked whether he should open the bottle of champagne. "Yes, certainly, open it," said Quadri.

The waiter took the bottle out of the ice pail, wrapped its neck in a napkin, pushed the cork upwards and then swiftly, poured the foaming wine into the champagne glasses. Quadri rose to his feet, glass in hand. "Let us drink to the Cause," he said; and turning to Marcello "You didn't want to take the letter, but at least you won't mind drinking a toast will you?" He seemed moved, and his eyes were bright with tears; and yet Marcello noticed a certain look of cunning, even of calculation, both in the way he proposed the toast and in the expression of his face. Marcello looked at his wife, and at Lina, before he answered. Giulia, who had risen to her feet, gave him a meaningful glance, as much as to say, "You can surely drink the toast." Lina was holding her glass in her hand and her eyes were downcast, and she looked cold and angry, and most bored. Marcello stood up and said, "To the Cause, then," and held out his glass to tap it against Quadri's. With an almost childish scruple he was careful to address mentally "my Cause," although it seemed to him now that he no longer had any cause to defend but merely a painful incomprehensible duty to perform. He noticed with displeasure that Lina avoided tapping her glass against his. Giulia, on the other hand, with exaggerated cordiality, sought each person's glass, calling their names in a touchingly eager manner. "Lina, Signor Quadri, Marcello." The sharp, melancholy tinkling sound of the glasses made him shudder again, as the striking of the clock had done previously. He looked up at the ceiling and saw the head of Orlando looking down at him with bright, expressionless eyes.

in a severed head. Quadri held out his glass to the waiter, who filled it again; then, endowing the gesture with a characteristic, sentimental emphasis, he turned towards Marcello, raising his glass, and said, "And now to your own personal health, Clerici . . . and thank you." He stressed the word "thank you" in a meaning manner, emptied his glass at one gulp and sat down.

For some minutes they drank in silence. Giulia had twice emptied her glass, and was now looking at her husband with a tender, grateful, tipsy expression. Suddenly she exclaimed: "How good champagne is! . . . I say, Marcello, don't you think champagne's good stuff?"

"Yes, it's a very good wine," he admitted.

"You don't appreciate it enough," said Giulia. "It's absolutely delicious . . . I'm tight already." She laughed and shook her head and then suddenly went on, raising her glass, "Come on, Marcello, let's drink to our love."

Tipsy, laughing, she held out her glass. The professor looked on from a distance; Lina, with a cold, disgusted expression on her face, made no attempt to hide her disapproval. Suddenly Giulia changed her mind. "No," she cried, "you're too austere, it's quite true . . . You're ashamed to drink to our love . . . so I shall drink, all by myself, to life—to life that I love and that's so beautiful . . . to life!" She drank with a joyful, awkward haste that caused part of the wine to be upset on the table; then she cried, "That brings luck!" and, wetting her fingers in the wine, made as if to touch Marcello on the temples. He could not help making a movement as though to defend himself. Then Giulia jumped up, exclaiming, "You are ashamed . . . well, I'm not"; and she went round the table and embraced Marcello, almost falling on top of him and kissing him hard on the mouth. "We're on our honeymoon," she said in a challenging tone as she went back to her place, breathless and laughing; "we're on our honeymoon and we're not here to engage in politics or carry back letters to Italy."

Quadri, to whom these words appeared to be addressed, said calmly, "You're quite right, Signora." Marcello, between Quadri's conscious allusions and his wife's uncon-

scious, innocent ones, preferred to remain silent and sit with downcast eyes. Lina allowed a moment's pause to elapse and then asked, in a casual sort of way, "What are you doing tomorrow?"

"We're going to Versailles," replied Marcello, wiping Giulia's lipstick from his mouth with his handkerchief.

"I'll come too," said Lina eagerly. "Let's go in the morning and have lunch there . . . I'll help my husband pack and then I'll come and fetch you."

"All right," said Marcello.

Lina went on, conscientiously, "I should like to have driven you there . . . but my husband's taking the car, so we shall have to go by train . . . It's gayer, anyway."

Quadri did not appear to have heard. He was paying the bill, and was extracting—and emphasizing its distinctness as he did so—banknotes folded in four from the pocket of his striped trousers. Marcello was on the point of handing him some money but Quadri refused it, saying: "Some other time . . . in Italy."

All of a sudden Giulia burst out, in a very loud voice: "In Savoy we'll be together . . . but I want to go to Versailles alone with my husband."

"Thank you," said Lina ironically, rising from the table; "that's what's called plain speaking, anyway."

"Please don't be offended," began Marcello, embarrassed, "it's the champagne . . ."

"No it's not, it's my love for you, you stupid!" said Giulia. Laughing, she went off with the professor toward the door. Marcello heard her continue: "Does it seem wrong to you that I should want to be alone with my husband during our honeymoon?"

"No, my dear," replied Quadri gently, "it's perfectly right."

Lina, meanwhile, was commenting in an acid tone: "How silly of me, I hadn't thought of it . . . Of course the expedition to Versailles is part of the ritual for young married couples."

At the door, Marcello insisted on Quadri's going out in front of him. As he was going out, he again heard the clock strike the hour; it was ten o'clock.

CHAPTER 16

THE professor took his seat at the wheel of the car, leaving the door open. "Your husband can go in front with mine," Lina said to Giulia, "and you come in the back with me."

But Giulia answered, in a teasing, tipsy way, "Why should I? Personally, I'd rather go in front," and she jumped in resolutely beside Quadri. So Marcello and Lina found themselves side by side on the back seat.

Marcello now felt a desire to take Lina at her word and behave as if he really believed that she loved him. In this desire there was more than a mere vindictive impulse; there was also a remnant of hope, as though in a contradictory and involuntary way he still had illusions about Lina's feelings. The car moved off, then slowed down at a dark spot in order to turn into a side street; and Marcello, taking advantage of the darkness, seized Lina's hand that was lying on her knee and pulled it down on to the seat between them. He saw her turn at his touch with an angry jerk, but this was quickly transformed into a false gesture of complicity and of urgent warning. The car went on, threading the narrow streets of the Latin Quarter, and all the time Marcello was squeezing Lina's hand. He could feel it lying tense within his own, rejecting his caress not merely with its muscles but even, so to speak, with its skin, while the fingers wriggled impotently in what seemed to be a mixture of repugnance, indignation and rage. At a corner the car heeled over and they fell against each other. Then Marcello seized Lina by the back of the neck, just as one takes hold of a cat that might turn and scratch, and, twisting her head to one side, kissed her on the mouth. She tried to disengage herself, but Marcello took a tighter hold on the thin, shaven, boyish neck, and then Lina, with a subdued groan, gave up all resistance and submitted to the kiss. Her lips, Marcello noticed, were twisted into a grimace of disgust; and

... but it's interesting." They went to an illuminated doorway, above which a small rectangle of red glass bore, in blue letters, the words: *La Cravate Noire*. "The Black Tie," explained Lina to Giulia; "it means the black tie that men wear with dinner jackets and that all the women here wear, from the waitresses to the proprietress." They went into the vestibule and immediately a face with hard features and short hair, but beardless and of feminine complexion and character, appeared above the cloakroom counter, saying in a thin voice: "*Vestiare*." Giulia, amused, went up to the counter and turned around, letting her cloak fall from her bare shoulders into the hands of this attendant in a black jacket, starched shirt and bow tie. Then, in an atmosphere thick with smoke and a deafening hum of music and voices, they passed through to the dance floor.

A handsome woman, of uncertain age but no longer young, her plump, pale, smooth face rounded off under the chin by the usual black bow tie, came forward between the crowded tables to meet them. She greeted Quadri's wife with affectionate familiarity, and then, raising to her commanding eye a monocle that was fastened by a silk cord to the lapel of her masculine jacket, said, "Four people . . . I've just the right thing for you, Madame Quadri . . . Please come this way . . ." Lina, who appeared to have been put in a good humor by the place they were in, leaned over the shoulder of the woman with the eyeglass and made some gay, malicious remark, to which she responded, in a manly fashion, with a shrug of the shoulders and a scornful grimace. Following her, they reached an empty table at the far end of the room. "*Voilà!*" said the proprietress. Now she, in her turn, bent down over Lina who had taken her seat, murmured something into her ear with a jocular, impudent, look, and then, very upright, her small, glossy head held commandingly erect, went off among the tables.

A small, sturdy, very dark-complexioned waitress, dressed in the same fashion, came to their table, and Lina, with the gay, self-possessed sureness of someone who at last finds herself in a place that suits her tastes, ordered the drinks. Then she turned towards Giulia and said

cheerfully, "You see how they're dressed? . . . Just like a convent, isn't it? . . . Don't you think it's odd?"

Giulia, it seemed to Marcello, was now looking embarrassed; and she smiled in an entirely conventional manner. In a small round space among the tables, under a kind of inverted cement mushroom that vibrated with the unreal light of neon lamps, was a throng of dancing couples, some of them women dancing together. The orchestra—also composed of women dressed as men—was banished under the stairs that led to the gallery. The professor said, in rather a vague way, "I don't care for this place . . . These women seem to me to be more worthy of pity than of curiosity." Lina did not appear to have heard her husband's remark. She never stopped gazing at Giulia, with eyes that were filled with a devouring, infatuated, yearning light. At last, as if yielding to an irresistible longing, she suggested, with a nervous laugh: "Shall we dance together? They'll take us for two of themselves . . . it'll be amusing . . . Let's pretend to be like them . . . Come along, do . . ."

Laughing excitedly, she had already risen to her feet and, with one hand on Giulia's shoulder, was urging her to do the same. Giulia, irresolute, looked first at her and then at her husband. Marcello said drily, "What are you looking at me for? . . . There's no harm in it." He saw that, now again, he had to support Lina. Giulia sighed and rose slowly and unwillingly to her feet. The other woman, in the meantime, seemed to lose her head altogether, and kept repeating, "If even your husband says there's no harm in it . . . Come along, do, come along . . ." As Giulia went off, she said, "To tell the truth, I'm not particularly anxious to be taken for one of them." But she walked off in front of Lina and, when she reached the space reserved for dancing, turned back toward her with arms outstretched so that Lina could take hold of her. Marcello watched Lina go close to her, put her arm around Giulia's waist with manly assurance and authority, and then, falling into a dance step, guide her on to the dance floor among the other couples. For a moment he gazed, in vague but painful astonishment at the two women dancing in each other's arms. Giulia was smiling.

than Lina; they were dancing cheek to cheek, and, at each step, Lina's arm seemed to enfold Giulia's waist more closely. To him it appeared a sad and unbelievable sight: there, he could not help thinking, was the love which, had the world been different, had life been different, would have been his, would have saved him, would have brought him joy. But he was aware of a hand on his arm. He turned and saw Quadri's red, shapeless face bending towards him. "Clerici," said Quadri in a voice full of emotion, "don't imagine that I haven't understood you."

Marcello looked at him and said slowly: "Excuse me, but now it's I who fail to understand you."

"Clerici," answered the other man quickly, "you know who *I* am . . . but I also know who *you* are." He was looking at him intently, and had now taken hold, with both hands of the lapels of Marcello's jacket. The latter, agitated, frozen with a sort of terror, stared back into his face: no, there was no hatred in Quadri's eyes, there was, rather, a look of sentimental, tearful, melting emotion which at the same time had something slightly calculating and malicious about it. Then Quadri went on, "I know who you are, and I realize that, by speaking in this way, I may give you the impression that I am under an illusion, that I am being naïve, or even downright stupid . . . Never mind . . . Clerici, I want, in spite of everything, to be sincere with you, and I say to you: thank you."

Marcello looked at him but said nothing. Quadri's hands were still on the lapels of his coat and he felt it being pulled tightly down on his neck as though someone had seized hold of him with the object of thrusting him violently away. "I say to you: thank you," continued Quadri, "for having refused to take that letter to Italy . . . If you had done your duty, you would have taken the letter and handed it on to your superiors . . . so as to get it deciphered and have the people it was addressed to arrested . . . You didn't do it, Clerici, you refused to do it . . . from loyalty, from a sudden recognition of error or a sudden doubt, from honesty . . . I don't know . . . I only know that you didn't do it and I repeat again: thank you."

Marcello was on the point of replying, but Quadri, at last letting go of his jacket, put his hand in front of his mouth. "No," he said, "don't tell me you refused to take charge of the letter in order not to arouse my suspicions; in order to act up to your own obligations as a bridegroom on his honeymoon . . . Don't tell me that because I know it isn't true . . . What you've really done is to take the first step towards your own redemption . . . and I thank you for having given me the opportunity of helping you to take it . . . Go on, Clerici . . . and you may be truly reborn to a new life." Quadri fell back in his seat and made a pretence of wishing to quench his thirst, taking a long draught from his glass. "But here are the ladies," he said, rising to his feet. Marcello, bewildered, followed his example.

He noticed that Lina appeared to be in a bad temper. When she had sat down, she opened her compact in an angry, hurried sort of way, and with a series of furious dabs hastily powdered her nose and cheeks. Giulia, on the other hand, was quite placid and indifferent. She sat down beside her husband and took his hand affectionately, under the table, as if to assert clearly her feeling of repugnance for Lina. The proprietress with the eyeglass came up to them and crinkling her smooth, pale cheek into a honeyed smile, asked in an affected voice whether everything was all right.

Lina answered tartly that things couldn't be better. The proprietress bent down towards Giulia and said to her, "It's the first time you've been here . . . May I offer you a flower?"

"Thank you," said Giulia, surprised.

"Christina," called the proprietress. Another girl in a dinner jacket came up—very different from the resplendent flower girls usually to be found at night clubs. She was pale and thin, with no make-up, and had an Oriental-looking face with a big nose, thick lips, and a bare, bony forehead beneath hair cut extremely short and unevenly, so that it looked as if it had fallen out as the result of an illness. She held out a basket of gardenias, and the proprietress, having selected one, pinned it on Giulia's

bosom, with the words, "An offering from the management."

"Thank you," repeated Giulia.

"Not at all," said the proprietress. "Now, I'll bet Madame is Spanish . . . isn't that so?"

"Italian," said Lina.

"Ah, Italian . . . I ought to have known it . . . with those black eyes . . ." The words were lost in the noise of the crowd, as the proprietress and the thin, melancholy Christina went off together.

The band had now started to play again. Lina turned towards Marcello and said to him, almost angrily, "Why don't you ask me to dance? I should like to." Without a word he rose and followed her to the dance floor.

They began dancing. Lina held herself well away from Marcello, who could not help remembering sadly the possessive affection with which, a short time before, she had clung to Giulia. They danced in silence for a little, and then, all of a sudden, with a violence in which the fiction of their amorous collusion was curiously tinged with anger and aversion, Lina said to him, "Instead of kissing me in the car, with the risk of my husband noticing it, you might have made your wife give in about the expedition to Versailles."

Marcello was astonished at the naturalness with which she grafted her real anger on to the unreal love-relationship; and also at the cynical, brutal, familiar way in which she addressed him, which seemed typical of a woman who has no scruple in betraying her husband. For a moment he said nothing. Lina, interpreting this silence in her own way, persisted, "Why don't you say something? . . . Is this your love? You're not even capable of making that silly wife of yours obey you."

"My wife isn't silly," he replied gently, more puzzled than offended by this strange anger.

She flung herself without hesitation into the opening that this answer gave her. "What d'you mean, she's not silly?" she exclaimed, irritated and almost surprised. "My dear man, even a blind man could see it . . . She's beautiful, certainly, but completely stupid . . . a beautiful animal . . . How can you fail to see that?"

"I like her as she is," he hazarded.

"A goose . . . A fool . . . the Côte d'Azur . . . Just a little provincial miss without a crumb of brain . . . The Côte d'Azur, indeed . . . why not Monté Carlo then, or Deauville? . . . or even just the Eiffel Tower?" She seemed beside herself with rage—which, to Marcello's mind, was a sure sign that there had been some unpleasant discussion between her and Giulia while they were dancing together.

"Don't worry about my wife," he said gently. "Just come to the hotel tomorrow morning . . . Giulia will have to accept the fact that you're there . . . and we'll all three go to Versailles."

She threw him a look almost of hope. But then anger prevailed again and she said, "What an absurd ideal . . . Your wife said quite clearly that she did not want me to come . . . and I haven't the habit of going where I'm not wanted."

Marcello answered simply, "Well, I want you to come."

"Yes, but your wife doesn't."

"What does it matter to you about my wife? Isn't it enough that you and I love each other?"

She studied him uneasily and mistrustfully, pulling back her head, her soft, arching breast close against his. "Really," she said, "you talk of our love as if we'd been lovers for goodness knows how long . . . But d'you think we love each other seriously?"

Marcello would have liked to say, "Why don't you love me? I could love you so much." But the words died on his lips, like echoes smothered by an impassable remoteness. It seemed to him that he had never loved her so much as at this moment, when, forcing pretence to the point of parody, she insincerely asked him if he were sure he loved her. At last, sadly, he said, "You know I wish we loved each other."

"So do I," she answered vaguely; and it was clear that she was thinking of Giulia. Then, as though waking up to reality, she added with sudden rage, "In any case, please don't kiss me again in the car or anywhere like that . . . I've never been able to bear effusions of that

kind . . . They seem to me to show not only a lack of consideration but a lack of breeding as well."

"You haven't yet told me," he said, clenching his teeth, "whether you are coming to Versailles tomorrow."

He saw her hesitate, and then, perplexed, she asked, "Do you really think your wife won't be annoyed when she sees me arriving? . . . She won't insult me as she did today at the restaurant?"

"I'm sure she won't. She may be a bit surprised, that's all. But before you come I'll be sure and bring her round."

"Will you be able to?"

"Yes."

"I have the impression that your wife can't endure me," she said in a questioning tone, as though waiting to be reassured.

"You're wrong," he replied, gratifying her half-expressed wish, "on the contrary, she likes you very much."

"Really?"

"Yes, really . . . She was telling me so only today."

"And what did she say?"

"Oh Lord, nothing very special . . . That you were beautiful, that you seemed intelligent . . . the truth, in fact."

"I'll come, then," she decided, "I'll come immediately after my husband leaves . . . about nine . . . so that we can catch the ten o'clock train . . . I'll come to your hotel."

Marcello resented this haste, this relief, on her part, as yet another offence to his own feeling for her. And, kindled suddenly by an indefinable longing for a love-relationship of any kind, even a false, ambiguous one, he said, "I'm so glad you've decided to come."

"Yes?"

"Yes, because I don't think you'd have done it unless you loved me."

"I might have done it for some other reason," she replied maliciously.

"What reason?"

"We women are spiteful . . . just to be spiteful to your wife."

So she thought only of Giulia, all the time. Marcello said nothing, but, still dancing, guided her toward the entrance door. Two more turns, and they found themselves right in front of the cloakroom, one step from the door. "But where are you taking me?" she asked.

"Listen," pleaded Marcello in a low voice, so that the attendant, standing behind the counter, could not hear him, "let's go out into the street for a moment."

"What for?"

"There's no one there . . . I want you to give me a kiss . . . of your own accord . . . to show me that you really love me."

"I shouldn't dream of such a thing," she said, her anger flaring up again suddenly.

"But why? . . . It's a deserted street, quite dark . . ."

"I've already told you that I can't bear these public displays."

"Please."

"Leave me alone," she said, in a hard, loud voice; and she disengaged herself and went quickly back to the dance floor. Marcello, as though swept away by her outburst, crossed the threshold and went out into the street.

The street, as he had told Lina, was dark and deserted, and the pavements, dimly lit by infrequent lampposts, were bare of passers-by. On the far side of the street, under the high garden wall, stood a few cars. Marcello took his handkerchief from his pocket and stood looking at the leafy tree tops above the wall as he wiped his sweating brow. He felt stunned, as if he had received a sharp, violent blow over the head. He did not remember ever having so humbly entreated a woman before, and was almost ashamed of having done so. At the same time he realized that all hope of inducing Lina not so much to love him as simply, even, to understand him, had now vanished. At that moment he heard behind him the sound of a car engine, and then the car itself slid up beside him and stopped. There was a light inside; and at the wheel Marcello saw the figure—looking just like that of a familiar chauffeur—of the Secret Service agent Orlando. His companion with the long, thin, bird-of-prey face sat beside him. "Sir," whispered Orlando.

At the hotel they all got out of the car to say their farewells. Quadri, after hurriedly shaking hands with Marcello and Giulia, went back to the car. Lina dallied a moment to say something to Giulia, and then Giulia said good-bye to her and went into the hotel. For a moment Lina and Marcello were left alone on the pavement. He said, in an embarrassed way, "Till tomorrow, then." "Till tomorrow," she echoed, bowing and smiling in her social manner. Then she turned away from him; and he rejoined Giulia in the hall of the hotel.

CHAPTER 17

WHEN Marcello awoke and turned his eyes up toward the ceiling, in the dim, uncertain light of half-closed shutters, he remembered immediately that at that hour Quadri was already driving over the roads of France, followed at a short distance by Orlando and his men; and he realized that the visit to Paris was over. The visit was over, he repeated to himself, although the visit had scarcely begun. It was over because, with Quadri's death—which was already, so to speak, paid for—he had brought to a conclusion that period of his life during which he had tried by every possible means to rid himself of the burden of solitude and abnormality with which Lino's death had left him. He had succeeded in this at the price of a crime, or, rather, of what would have been a crime if he had not known how to justify it and give it a meaning. As far as he himself was concerned, he was sure that such justification would not be wanting. As a good husband, a good father, a good citizen, he would see his life slowly but steadily acquiring the completeness it had hitherto lacked; and this too was thanks to Quadri's death which, once and for all, precluded any turning back. So it was that Lino's death, that had been the first cause of his somber tragedy, would be nullified and canceled out by Quadri's, just as, once upon a time, the expiatory sacrifice

of an innocent human victim nullified and canceled on the guilt of a previous crime. But it was not only he himself that was concerned. The justification of his life and of the murder of Quadri did not depend only on him. "The time has come," he argued lucidly, "when others must do their duty too . . . otherwise I shall be left alone, with this dead man on my hands, and in the end I shall have merely added nothing to nothing." The others, as he well knew, were the government he had agreed to serve by means of this murder, the social system that expressed itself in that same government, and the nation itself that accepted the guidance of that social system. It would not be enough to say: "I have done my duty . . . I have acted in this way because I was ordered to do so." Such a justification might suffice for Orlando the Secret Service man, but not for him. What was needed, for him, was the complete success of that government, that social system, that nation; and not merely an external success but an intimate, essential success as well. Only in that way could what was normally considered an ordinary crime become, instead, a positive step in a necessary direction. In other words, there must be brought about, thanks to forces that did not depend on him, a complete transformation of values. Injustice must become justice; treachery, heroism; death, life. At this point he felt the need to express his own position in crude, sarcastic words, and said to himself coldly, "If, in fact, fascism is a failure, if all the blackguards and incompetents and imbeciles in Rome bring the Italian nation to ruin, then I'm nothing but a wretched murderer." But he immediately made mental correction. "And yet, as things are now, I couldn't have done otherwise."

Giulia, who was still asleep beside him, stirred, and with a slow, strong, gradual movement clasped him tightly, first with her two arms, then with her legs, and laid her head on his chest. Marcello made no resistance, but he put out his arm and took up the little luminous clock on the bed table to look at the time. It was a quarter past nine. If things had gone as Orlando had led him to suppose they would, at this moment at some point or other on some French highway, Quadri's car must be lying aban-

done in a ditch with a corpse at the wheel. Giulia murmured, "What time is it?"

"A quarter past nine."

"Ugh, how late it is," she said without moving. "We've slept at least nine hours."

"You see how tired we must have been."

"Aren't we going to Versailles?"

"Yes, of course . . . In fact we ought to get dressed," he said with a sigh, "Signora Quadri will soon be here."

"I'd much rather she wasn't coming . . . She never leaves me in peace, with her love-making."

Marcello said nothing. After a moment Giulia went on: "And what's the program for the next few days?"

Before he could prevent himself, Marcello replied, "We must go home," in a voice that sounded to him positively mournful, from the melancholy he was feeling.

Giulia now roused herself and, pulling back her head and shoulders a little but not letting go of him, asked in an astonished voice, in alarm, "Go home? So soon? We've barely arrived and we've got to go back already?"

"I didn't tell you yesterday," he lied, "because I didn't want to spoil the evening for you . . . But in the afternoon I got a telegram recalling me to Rome."

"Oh, what a pity! . . . what a dreadful pity!" said Giulia in a good-natured, already resigned tone, "just when I was beginning to enjoy Paris . . . Besides, we haven't seen anything."

"D'you mind very much?" he asked her gently, stroking her head.

"No, but I should have liked to stay a few days at any rate . . . if only to get some idea of Paris."

"We'll come back again."

There was silence. Then Giulia, with a lively movement of her arms and her whole body, pressed up against him and said: "Well, tell me anyhow what we're going to do in the future . . . What's our life going to be?"

"Why d'you want to know that?"

"Never mind," she answered, snuggling up against him. "Because I like so much to talk about the future . . . in bed . . . in the dark."

"Well," began Marcello in a calm, colorless voice, "go back now to Rome and look for a place to live."

"How big a place?"

"Four or five rooms plus offices . . . Having found we buy everything necessary to furnish it."

"I should like a flat on the ground floor," she said in dreamy voice, "with a garden . . . not a big one . . . but with trees and flowers, so that one could sit out in when it's fine."

"Nothing could be easier," Marcello agreed. "Then we'll set up house . . . I think I'll have enough money to furnish it completely . . . not with expensive things of course . . ."

"You must have a nice study of your own," she said.

"Why should I have a study, considering that I work in an office . . . Better a good big living room."

"Yes, a living room, drawing room and dining room combined. And we'll have a nice bedroom too, shan't we?"

"Yes, of course."

"But none of those dreary old-fashioned beds . . . I want a real proper bedroom, with a proper double bed . . . And tell me . . . we'll have a nice kitchen too?"

"Certainly we'll have a nice kitchen, why not?"

"I want to have a double stove, with gas and electricity . . . And I want a nice refrigerator too . . . If I haven't enough money, these things can be bought by installments. That will make it easier."

"Yes, of course . . . by installments."

"And tell me, what are we going to do in this house?"

"We're going to live in it and be happy."

"I do need so much to be happy," she said, cuddling up even closer to him, "so very much . . . If you know . . . It seems to me I've needed to be happy ever since I was born."

"Well, we will be happy," said Marcello with almost aggressive firmness.

"And shall we have children?"

"Of course."

"I want lots of them," she said with a kind of singing intonation, "I want one every year, at least for the first four years of our marriage . . . so that then we shall have

a family and I want to have a family as quickly as possible . . . It seems to me that one oughtn't to wait, otherwise it may be too late . . . And when one has a family, all the rest comes of itself, doesn't it?"

"Of course, all the rest comes of itself."

She was silent a moment and then asked, "D'you think I'm with child already?"

"How could I know?"

"If I am," she said with a laugh, "it would mean that our child was begotten in the train."

"Would you like that?"

"Yes, it would be a lucky sign for him . . . You never know, he might become a great traveler . . . The first child I want to be a boy . . . then I'd rather the second was a girl . . . I'm sure she'd be very beautiful . . . You're good-looking and I'm not exactly ugly . . . We two certainly ought to have very lovely children."

Marcello said nothing and Giulia went on, "Why are you so silent? Wouldn't you like to have children by me?"

"Of course I should," he replied; and all of a sudden he felt, to his astonishment, two tears spout out of his eyes and trickle down his cheeks. And then two more, hot and scalding, like tears already wept some time long past, that had lain within his eyes to be infused with burning sorrow. He knew that what made him weep was Giulia's talk of happiness of a few minutes before, and yet he was unable to define the reason of it. Perhaps it was because this happiness had been paid for in advance at so dear a price; perhaps because he realized that he would never be able to be happy, not, anyhow, in the simple, affectionate way described by Giulia. With an effort he at last repressed his desire to weep, and, without Giulia's noticing it, wiped his eyes with the back of his hand. Giulia, meanwhile, was embracing him more and more closely, clinging to him desirously with her body, seeking to guide his listless, inattentive hands to caress and enfold her. Then he felt her bend her face toward his and begin kissing him repeatedly on his cheeks and his mouth, on his brow and on his chin, with a kind of frantic, childish eagerness. Finally she whispered to him, in an almost mournful tone, "Why won't you come to me . . . Come

and take me," and he seemed to detect in her voice entreaty something like a reproof for having thought more of his own happiness than of hers. And then, when he was embracing her, penetrating, gently and easily, into her, and while she, beneath him, her head thrown back on the pillow, her eyes closed, was beginning to raise and lower her hips with a regular, composed, vaguely thoughtful motion, like that of a wave rising and falling with the ebb and flow of the tide—at that moment there was a loud knock on the door and a voice called: "Express Messenger!"

"What can it be?" she murmured, panting, half opening her eyes; "don't move . . . What does it matter?" Marcello turned his head and could just see, on the floor in the brighter light near the door, a letter which had been pushed in through the crack. At the same moment Giulia became motionless and rigid beneath him, throwing back her head and breathing deeply and pressing her fingernails into his arms. She twisted her head on the pillow first one way and then the other, and murmured "Kill me."

Irrationally, Marcello recalled Lino's cry, "Kill me like a dog!" He was conscious of a horrible anxiety sweeping over him. He waited for some time, until Giulia's hands fell back upon the bed; then he turned on the lamp, got up, fetched the letter and came and lay down again beside his wife. Giulia had now curled up with her back to him and her eyes closed. Marcello looked at the letter before putting it down on the edge of the bed close to her mouth which was still open and panting. The envelope was addressed to "Madame Giulia Clerici" in an obviously feminine hand. "A letter from Signora Quadri," he said.

Giulia, without opening her eyes, murmured, "Give it to me."

A long silence followed. The letter was lying level with Giulia's mouth, in the full light of the lamp. Giulia, relaxed and motionless, appeared to be asleep. Then she sighed, opened her eyes, and taking hold of the corner of the letter in one hand, tore open the envelope with her teeth, pulled out the sheet of paper

Marcello saw her smile; then she murmured, "They say that in love the one who flies is the winner . . . Since I treated her badly yesterday evening, she informs me that she has changed her mind and has gone off this morning with her husband . . . She hopes I'll join her . . . *Bon voyage.*"

"She's gone? repeated Marcello.

"Yes, she left at seven this morning with her husband, for Savoy . . . And you know why she's gone? You remember yesterday evening, when I danced with her the second time? It was I who asked her to dance and she was pleased because she hoped I was at last going to take some notice of her . . . Well, I told her, on the contrary, with the greatest frankness, that she must give up all idea of me . . . and that if she went on, I should cease to see her altogether, and that I loved no one but you, and that she must leave me in peace, and that she ought to be ashamed of herself . . . In fact I said so many things to her she almost burst into tears . . . That's why she's gone today . . . You see how she calculated?—I go away so that you can join me again . . . She'll have to wait a bit."

"Yes, she'll have to wait a bit," repeated Marcello.

"In any case I'm very glad she's gone," resumed Guilia. "She was so persistent and tiresome . . . As for joining her again, don't let's even speak of it . . . I don't want ever to see that woman again."

"You won't ever see her again," said Marcello.

CHAPTER 18

THE room at the Ministry in which Marcello worked looked out on to a lesser courtyard. It was a very small room, unsymmetrical in shape, and contained nothing but a desk and a couple of shelves. It was at the end of a corridor that led nowhere, and was a long way from the waiting room. To get to it Marcello used a back staircase

that came out at the rear of the building into an un-
frequented lane. One morning, a week after his return from
Paris, he was sitting at his table. In spite of the great heat
he had neither taken off his jacket nor undone his shirt,
many of his colleagues did. He had the punctilious habit
of never altering in the office the appearance that he wore
outside of it. Fully dressed, therefore, his neck exposed
in a high, tight starched collar, he started examining the
Italian and foreign newspapers before getting down to
work. That morning again, though six days had now
passed, his first glance was for the Quadri murder. He
noticed that both news and headlines were much repeated,
a sure sign that the investigations had made no progress.
A couple of French newspapers of the Left gave the whole
story of the crime over again, punctuating their account
with interpretations of certain odd or significant details
that Quadri had been stabbed to death in the depths of the
wood; that his wife, on the other hand, had been hit by
three revolver bullets at the side of the road and her body
then dragged into the wood beside her husband's. The
car had also been taken into the wood and hidden
among the bushes. The care with which the bodies and
the car had been concealed among the trees, a long way
from the road, had prevented discovery for two days.

The newspapers of the Left gave it out as a certainty
that the couple had been killed by assassins specially sent
from Italy. Some of the papers of the Right, on the other
hand, took the risk of giving—though in a questioning
manner—the official account as given in the Italian papers
—that they had been murdered by anti-Francoist soldiers re-
turning from the war in Spain. Marcello threw aside the
and took up a French illustrated review. He was im-
mediately struck by a photograph on the front page which
formed part of a full journalistic account of the crime.
The picture carried the title: "The Tomb of the
of Gevaudan," and must have been taken soon after
of the discovery or soon after the growth of a wood with straight
branches, bright patches of

trunks, and on the ground, half hidden in the long grass difficult to see at a first glance in the confused variation of light and shade; the two bodies. Quadri was lying on his back, and of him nothing could be seen but the shoulders and the head, and of the latter only the chin with the black line of a cut across the throat. Lina was lying half across her husband, and her whole person could be seen. Marcello calmly put down his lighted cigarette on the edge of the ash tray, took up a magnifying glass and scrutinized the photograph with care. Although it was gray and out of focus and indistinct because of the patches of sun and shade in the undergrowth, it showed Lina's body quite recognizably—at the same time both slender and fully formed, both pure and sensual, both beautiful and bizarre, with the broad shoulders below the delicate, thin neck, the full bosom above the wasplike slimness of the waist, the wide hips and the long, elegant legs. Part of her body and her widely spread skirt covered the body of her husband, and it looked as though she were trying to whisper into his ear as she lay there, twisted to one side, her face buried in the grass, her mouth against his cheek.

For a long time Marcello looked at the photograph through the magnifying glass, seeking to examine every line, every shadow, every detail of it. He felt that this picture, filled with a stillness that went beyond the mechanical stillness of the photograph had attained the last, final stillness of death, breathed an atmosphere of enviable peace. The photograph, it seemed to him, was full of the utterly profound silence that must have followed the terrible, lightning-like suddenness of the death agony. A few moments before, all had been confusion, violence, terror, hatred, hope, despair; a few moments, and all was finished, hushed. He remembered that the two bodies had lain for a long time in the undergrowth, almost two days; and he pictured to himself how the sun must have warmed them for many hours and gathered about them the humming life of insects, and how it must then have gone away, slowly leaving them to the silent darkness of the gentle summer night. The dews of night had wept upon their cheeks, the faint wind had murmured in the highest branches and in the bushes of the undergrowth.

With sunrise, the lights and shadows of the day had returned, as if to an appointed meeting place, to play over the two figures as they lay there motionless. Rejoicing in the freshness and pure splendor of the morning, a bird had perched on a branch to sing its song. A bee had circled around Lina's head, a flower had opened beside Quadri's thrown-back forehead. As they lay there silent and still, the chattering waters of the brooks that wound through the forest had spoken to them, the inhabitants of the wood—stealthy squirrels, bounding rabbits—had moved about them. And all the time, beneath them, the earth on which they lay had slowly taken the impression in its soft bed of grass and moss, of the stiff forms of their bodies, had been preparing, in answer to their mute request, to receive them into its lap.

He started at a knock on the door, threw away the review and called, "Come in!" The door opened slowly and for a moment Marcello could see no one. Then, looking cautiously through the opening, appeared the honest, peaceable, broad face of the Secret Service agent Orlando.

"May I come in, sir?"

"Of course, Orlando," said Marcello in an official tone of voice, "come in. . . Have you something to tell me?"

Orlando came in, closed the door, and walked forward staring hard at Marcello. And then, for the first time Marcello noticed that everything about that florid, heated face was good-natured—everything except the eyes, which small and deep-set below the bald forehead, glittered in a singular manner. "How odd," thought Marcello as he looked at him, "that I hadn't noticed before." He made sign to Orlando to sit down and the latter obeyed without a word, still staring at him with those brilliant eyes. "Cigarette?" suggested Marcello, holding out his case.

"Thank you, sir," said the other man, taking a cigarette. There was silence for a moment. Then Orlando blew some smoke from his mouth, looked for an instant at the lighted end of his cigarette, and said, "D'you know, sir, what is the most curious thing about the Quadri affair?"

"No, what?"

"That is wasn't necessary."

raph that he handed to Marcello, who took it and looked at it. It showed five children between thirteen and six years old, standing in a row in order of size, three girls and two boys, all in their best clothes, the girls in white, the boys in sailor suits. All five of them, Marcello observed, had round, peaceable sensible faces very like their father's. "They're in the country with their mother," said Orlando, taking back the photograph Marcello handed to him; "the biggest girl's already working as a dressmaker."

"They're fine children, and very like you," said Marcello.

"Thank you, sir. . . Well, good-bye then, sir." Orlando, cheerful again, bowed twice as he retreated backward. At that moment the door opened and Giulia appeared, "Thank you again, sir, thank you again." Orlando stood aside to let Giulia pass, and then disappeared.

Giulia came in and said immediately, "I was passing this way and I thought I'd pay you a visit. . . How are you?"

"I'm all right," said Marcello.

Standing in front of the desk she looked at him, hesitating, full of doubt and apprehension. Finally she said, "Don't you think you're working too hard?"

"No," answered Marcello, throwing a quick glance at the open window. "Why?"

"You look tired." Giulia walked round the desk and then stood still for a little, leaning against the arm of the chair and looking at the newspapers scattered over the table. Then she asked, "No news?"

"About what?"

"In the papers, about the Quadri affair."

"No, nothing."

After a moment's silence, she said, "I feel more and more certain that it was of his own party who killed him. What d'you think about it?"

It was the official version of the crime, handed out to the Italian newspapers from the propaganda offices the same morning that the news had arrived from Paris. Giulia, Marcello noticed, had mentioned it with a kind of determined good will, as though she were hoping to

convince herself. He replied drily, "I don't know. It might be so."

"I'm convinced of it," she repeated resolutely then, after a moment of hesitation, she went on: "Sometimes I think that if I hadn't treated Ori's wife so badly that evening, at the night club, she would have stayed in Paris and she wouldn't be dead. And then I have a feeling of remorse. . . But what do I do? It was her fault, because she wouldn't give me a moment's peace."

Marcello wondered whether Giulia had any suspicion of the part he had taken in the killing of Quadri. After thinking it over, he decided against the possibility. In love, he felt, could have stood up to such a disclosure. Giulia was telling the truth: she felt remorse for Ori's death, because—though in a perfectly innocent manner—she had been the indirect cause of it. He wanted to assure her, but could find no better word than the one already pronounced, with such emphasis, by Ori. "You mustn't feel remorse," he said, putting his arm around her waist and drawing her toward him, "it was the will of Fate."

Lightly stroking his head, she answered, "I don't believe in Fate. . . The real reason was that I love you. If I didn't love you—who knows?—I might not have treated her so badly, and she wouldn't have gone away and she wouldn't be dead. . . What is there fatal about that?"

Marcello remembered Lino, the first cause of all his troubles of his life, and explained to her, though in a dreamy voice, looking at the papers scattered on the desk. "When one says Fate it's exactly those things that means, love and all the rest. . . You couldn't help loving as you did, nor could she, indeed, help going away with her husband."

"So we're not really able to do anything?" asked Ori in a dreamy voice, looking at the papers scattered on the desk.

Marcello hesitated, and then replied, with profound bitterness, "Yes, we're able to know that we're not able to do anything."

"And what's the use of that?"

...the next time... Or for others who came after us."

She walked away from him with a sigh and went to the door. "Don't forget to be in good time today," she said as she stood in the doorway, "Mummy's got a specially good lunch for us. . . And remember you mustn't make any appointments for the afternoon. . . We've got to go and look at those flats." She waved to him and vanished.

Left alone, Marcello took a pair of scissors, carefully cut out the photograph from the French review, put it in drawer with some other papers and locked the drawer. At that same moment the piercing wail of the noonday siren came down into the courtyard from the burning sky above. Immediately afterward church bells, near and far, began to ring.

CHAPTER 19

ING had fallen, and Marcello, who had spent the day on the bed smoking and meditating, rose and went to the window. Black in the greenish light of the summer dusk rose the surrounding blocks of flats, each with its bare cement courtyard adorned with small green flower beds and hedges of clipped myrtle. Here and there a window shone red, and in pantries and kitchens one could see menservants in striped working jackets and cooks in white aprons attending to their household duties among painted cupboards or electric stoves. Marcello looked up above the flat roofs of the buildings to where the last purple vapors of sunset were vanishing in the darkening sky; then he looked down again, and saw a car coming into a courtyard and stopping, and the driver getting out, together with a big white dog which at once started running about the flower beds, whining and barking with joy. This was a wealthy quarter, newly arisen in the last few years, and, looking at those courtyards and

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CHAPTER 19

EVENING had fallen, and Marcello, who had spent the day lying on the bed smoking and meditating, rose and went to the window. Black in the greenish light of the summer dusk rose the surrounding blocks of flats, each with its bare cement courtyard adorned with small green flower beds and hedges of clipped myrtle. Here and there a window shone red, and in pantries and kitchens one could see menservants in striped working jackets and cooks in white aprons attending to their household duties among painted cupboards or electric stoves. Marcello looked up above the flat roofs of the buildings to where the last purple vapors of sunset were vanishing in the darkening sky; then he looked down again, and saw a car coming into a courtyard and stopping, and the driver getting out, together with a big white dog which at once started running about the flower beds, whining and barking with joy. This was a wealthy quarter, newly arisen in the last few years, and, looking at those courtyards and

windows, nobody would have thought that a war had been going on for four years and that, on that very day a government that had lasted for twenty years had fallen. Nobody except himself, thought Marcello, and those who found themselves in the same position as he. There flashed upon him, for a moment, the image of a divine rod hanging over the great city as it lay peacefully beneath the clear sky, striking a family here, a family there, bringing terror and dismay and affliction upon them; while their neighbors remained unharmed. His own family was among those smitten, as he knew and as he had foreseen ever since the beginning of the war: a family just like other families, with the same affections and the same intimate ways, a perfectly normal family, possessing the normality that he had sought after with such tenacity for so many years and which was now revealed as a purely external thing entirely made up of abnormalities.

He remembered how he had said to his wife, on the day war broke out in Europe, "If I was logical, I ought to commit suicide today"; and he remembered also the terror that those words had aroused in her. It was as though she had known what they concealed, not merely that she foresaw an unfavorable outcome to the conflict. Once again he had wondered whether Giulia knew the truth about him and about the part he had taken in Quadri's death; and once again it seemed to him impossible that she could know, although, from certain indications, one might well suppose the contrary.

He realized now, with perfect clarity, that he had, as they say, backed the wrong horse; but why he had backed it in that way, and why the horse had not won—this, apart from the most obviously established facts, was not clear to him. He would have liked to be certain that all that had happened had had to happen; that, in fact, he could not have backed any other horse nor arrived at any different result: and he had a greater need of this certainty than of any liberation from a remorse that he did not feel. For him, the only remorse possible was for his mistake—that is, for having done what he had done for any absolute and fatal necessity. For having done either deliberately or involuntarily—ignored

ty of doing things that were entirely different. But if he could have the certainty that this was not true—well, then it seemed to him that he could be at peace with himself, even if only in his usual dim, colorless manner. In other words, he thought, he must be sure of having recognized his own destiny and of having accepted it as it was, as a thing useful to others and to himself perhaps in a merely negative way, but useful nevertheless.

He was comforted, meanwhile, in the midst of his doubts by the idea that, even if he had been wrong—a possibility that could not be excluded—he had yet staked more than anyone else, more than all those who found themselves in the same position as himself. This was a comfort to his pride, the only comfort now left him. Others would be able, tomorrow, to change their ideas, their party, their lives, their very characters. For him, however, this was impossible—not merely with respect to others, but to his own self as well. He had done what he had done for reasons entirely of his own, regardless of any communion with other people. To change now, even if it had been permitted him, would mean annihilation of himself. And that, of all the many methods of extinction, was the one he most wished to avoid.

At this point it occurred to him that, if he had been wrong, his first and greatest mistake had been in wishing to escape from his own abnormality and in seeking some kind of normality through which to communicate with other people. This mistake had had its origin in a powerful instinct. Unfortunately the normality that this instinct had happened to light upon was nothing more than an empty shell, inside which everything was abnormal and motiveless. At the first knock, this shell had been broken to pieces; and the instinct, so well justified and so human, had turned him from a victim into an executioner. His mistake had been not so much that he had killed Quadri, as that he had attempted, with inadequate means, to obliterate the original flaw in his own life. But, he wondered again, might it perhaps have been possible for things to have gone differently?

No, it would not have been possible, he thought, answering his own question. Lino had had to set a trap

his innocence, and he, to defend himself, had had to
kill him, and afterward, in order to rid himself, of his
gulfing sense of abnormality had had to seek after nor-
mality in the way he had done; and in order to obtain
his normality had had to pay a price equivalent to
the burden of abnormality of which he intended to rid
himself; and that price had been the death of Quadri.
Everything, therefore, though freely accepted, had been
ordained by fate, just as everything had been at the same
time both right and wrong.

All these things were not so much thoughts as feelings,
which he was acutely and painfully conscious, with a
sensation of anguish he rejected and defied. He wanted
to be calm and detached in face of the disaster to his
own life, as though he were watching some gloomy but
remote spectacle. His sensation of anguish made him sus-
pect the existence of a panic relationship between him-
self and outside events, in spite of the clearness with which
he forced himself to examine them. In any case it was
not easy, at this moment, to distinguish between clear-
ness and fear; and perhaps the best course was to main-
tain, as always, a decorous, impassive attitude. After all,
he said to himself, almost without irony and as though
adding up the total of his own modest ambitions, he had
nothing to lose—provided that loss was understood to
mean the sacrifice of his mediocre position as a govern-
ment official, of this home that had to be paid for by
installments in twenty-five years, of the car, which also
had to be paid for within two years, and of a few other
adornments of comfort that he had felt Giulia must be
allowed to have. He had really nothing to lose. And
when they had come at that moment to arrest him, the
vanishing of the material advantages he had derived from
his position would have astonished even his enemies.

He left the window and turned back into the room.
It contained, as Giulia had wished, a large double bed,
and the furniture was of shining, dark mahogany with
brass handles and ornaments, in a more or less "Em-
pire" style. It occurred to him that this furniture had
been bought on the installment plan too, that he
had finished paying for it only the year

whole of our life," he said to himself sarcastically, taking his jacket from the chair and putting it on, "is on the installment plan . . . but the last ones are the biggest and we shall never manage to pay them." He pushed back the rumpled bedside rug with his foot and went out of the room.

He went along the passage to a half-closed door at the other end, through which a little light was visible. It was his daughter's bedroom, and he paused a moment as he went in at the door and saw, with incredulity, the familiar, everyday scene that faced him. It was a small room, done up in the pretty, gaily colored style suitable to rooms in which children sleep and live. The furniture was painted pink, the curtains were pale blue, and the walls were covered with a paper that had a design of little baskets of flowers. On the carpet, also pink, were scattered untidily a number of dolls of varying sizes, as well as other toys. His wife was sitting beside the bed, in which lay Lucilla, their child. Giulia, who was talking to the child, turned slightly as he came in and cast a lingering glance at him, without, however, saying anything. Marcello took one of the little painted chairs and sat down beside the bed. "Good evening, Daddy," said the little girl.

"Good evening, Lucilla," replied Marcello, looking at her. She was a dark, delicate-looking child with a round face, enormous, melting eyes, and very fine features—features so excessively dainty that they looked almost affected. He did not know why, but at that moment she seemed to him to be too pretty and also too conscious of her own prettiness, in a manner that might well be a first sign of innocent coquettishness and that reminded him, unpleasingly, of his mother, whom the child strongly resembled. This coquettishness was noticeable in the way she rolled her big, velvety eyes when speaking to him or to her mother—an effect that was indeed odd in a child of six; and also in the extreme, almost unbelievable assurance of her conversation. In her blue nightgown, all lace and puffed sleeves, she was sitting up in bed with hands clasped, in the midst of her evening prayers which were interrupted by the entrance of her father. "Come on,

Lucilla, don't sit there dreaming," said her mother in good-natured way. "Come on, say your prayers after me."

"I'm not dreaming," said the child, turning her eyes up to the ceiling with an impatient, prim grimace. "It was you who stopped when Daddy came in . . . so I stopped too."

"You're quite right," said Giulia, unmoved, "but you know the prayer perfectly well. . . You could have gone on by yourself. . . When you're bigger, I won't always be there to help you. . . But you'll still have to say it."

"Look what a lot of time you make me waste . . . and I'm so tired," said the child, raising her shoulders slightly but keeping her hands clasped. "You start arguing, and I could have finished saying my prayers by now."

"Come along," repeated Giulia, smiling now in spite of herself, "let's begin again from the beginning: 'Hail Mary, full of grace.'"

The little girl repeated in a drawling voice, "Hail Mary, full of grace."

"The Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women."

"The Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women."

"And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

"And blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

"Can I rest a moment?" asked the child at this point.

"Why?" asked Giulia. "Are you tired already?"

"You've kept me like this for an hour, with my hands clasped," said the child, pulling her hands apart and looking at her father. "When Daddy came in we'd already said half the prayer." She rubbed her arms with her hands, making a disdainful, flirtatious display of her own weariness. Then she clasped her hands again, and said "I'm ready now."

"Holy Mary, mother of God," Giulia resumed quietly.

"Holy Mary, mother of God," repeated the child.

"Pray for us sinners."

"Pray for us sinners."

"Now and at the hour of our death."

"Now and at the hour of our death."

"So be it."

"But, you, Daddy, don't you ever say your prayers?" asked the child, without any transition.

"We say them in the evening before we go to bed," replied Giulia hurriedly. The child, however, was looking at Marcello with a questioning and incredulous air. He hastened to confirm what Giulia had said. "Of course, every evening before we go to bed."

"Now lie down and go to sleep," said Giulia, rising and trying to make the child lie flat. She managed to do this, but not without some difficulty, for Lucilla did not seem at all disposed to go to sleep; then she pulled up to the child's chin the single sheet which was the only covering on the bed.

"I'm hot," said the child, kicking at the sheet. "I'm so hot."

"Tomorrow we're going to Granny's and you won't be hot any more," answered Giulia.

"Where's Granny?"

"Up in the hills. . . It's cool there."

"But where?"

"I've told you dozens of times—Tagliacozzo. . . It's a cool place and we're going to stay there all the summer."

"But won't the airplanes come there?"

"The airplanes won't come any more."

"Why?"

"Because the war's over."

"And why is the war over?"

"Because two and two don't make three," said Giulia brusquely but not ill-humoredly. "Now that's enough questions. . . Go to sleep, because we're leaving early tomorrow morning. . . I'm just going to fetch your medicine." She went out, leaving father and daughter alone together.

"The little girls' governess told me that they can give me one of the kittens. . . Can I have it? I could take it to Tagliacozzo."

"But when were these kittens born?" asked Marcello.

"The day before yesterday."

"Then it's impossible," said Marcello, stroking his daughter's head. "The kittens must stay with their mother until they can take milk. . . You can have it when you come back from Tagliacozzo."

"Supposing we don't come back from Tagliacozzo?"

"Why shouldn't we come back? We're coming back at the end of the summer," replied Marcello, twisting his fingers in his daughter's soft brown hair.

"Ooo, you're hurting me," wailed the child instantly at the first touch.

Marcello let go of her hair and said, with a smile, "Why d'you say I hurt you? . . . You know it's not true."

"But you *did* hurt me," she replied emphatically. She put her hands up to her forehead, in a willful, feminine sort of way. "Now I shall have a terrible headache."

"Then I shall pull your ears," said Marcello jokingly. Delicately he lifted the hair over the little round, pink ear and gave it the faintest pull, shaking it like a bell. "Ooo, ooo, ooo," cried the child in a shrill voice, pretending to be hurt, a slight blush spreading over her face, "you're hurting me."

"You see what a little liar you are," said Marcello reprovingly, letting go of her ear. "You know, you oughtn't to tell lies."

"That time," she said sagaciously, "I promise you didn't really hurt me."

"D'you want me to give you one of your dolls for the night?" asked Marcello, looking down at the carpet where the toys lay scattered.

She cast a quietly scornful glance at the dolls and answered in a self-possessed manner, "If you like."

"If I like?" asked Marcello, smiling. "You talk as if it was you who were giving me a pleasure. . . Don't you like having a doll to sleep with?"

"Yes I do," she conceded. "

"But, you, Daddy, don't you ever say your prayers asked the child, without any transition.

"We say them in the evening before we go to bed," replied Giulia hurriedly. The child, however, was looking at Marcello with a questioning and incredulous air. He hastened to confirm what Giulia had said. "Of course, every evening before we go to bed."

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"Where's Granny?"

"Up in the hills. . . It's cool there."

"But where?"

"I've told you dozens of times—Tagliacozzo. . . It's a jol place and we're going to stay there all the summer."

"But won't the airplanes come there?"

"The airplanes won't come any more."

"Why?"

"Because the war's over."

"And why is the war over?"

"Because two and two don't make three," said Giulia brusquely but not ill-humoredly. "Now that's enough questions. . . Go to sleep, because we're leaving early tomorrow morning. . . I'm just going to fetch your medicine." She went out, leaving father and daughter alone together.

"Daddy," asked the little girl immediately, sitting up in bed again, "d'you remember the cat belonging to the people who live underneath?"

"Yes," replied Marcello, rising from his chair and coming across to sit on the edge of the bed.

"It's had four kittens."

"Well?"

"The little girls' governess told me that they can give me one of the kittens. . . Can I have it? I could take it to Tagliacozzo."

"When were these kittens born?" asked Marcello. "The day before yesterday."

"Even if it's impossible," said Marcello, stroking her hair. "The kittens must stay with their mother until they can take milk. . . You can have it when you come back from Tagliacozzo."

"Supposing we don't come back from Tagliacozzo?" she asked. "Why shouldn't we come back? We're coming back at the end of the summer," replied Marcello, twisting his fingers in his daughter's soft brown hair.

"No, you're hurting me," wailed the child instantly, pulling away from his first touch.

Marcello let go of her hair and said, with a smile, "I didn't hurt you? . . . You know it's not true." "But you *did* hurt me," she replied emphatically. She raised her hands up to her forehead, in a willful, feminine way. "Now I shall have a terrible headache."

"When I shall pull your ears," said Marcello jokingly. Instantly he lifted the hair over the little round, pink ear and gave it the faintest pull, shaking it like a bell. "Ooo, ooo," cried the child in a shrill voice, pretending to be hurt, a slight blush spreading over her cheeks. "You're hurting me."

"You see what a little liar you are," said Marcello sternly, letting go of her ear. "You know, you can't tell lies."

"At that time," she said sagaciously, "I promise you didn't hurt me."

"Do you want me to give you one of your dolls for the kitten?" asked Marcello, looking down at the carpet where the dolls lay scattered.

"I'll cast a quietly scornful glance at the dolls and answer in a self-possessed manner, 'If you like.'"

"Do I like?" asked Marcello, smiling. "You talk as if you were giving *me* a pleasure. . . Don't you want to have a doll to sleep with me?" she conceded.

looking down at the carpet, "give me that one with the pink dress."

Marcello also looked down. "They've all got pink dresses," he said.

"There's pink and pink," said the child, in an impatient, know-all kind of way. "The pink of the doll I want is exactly the same as the pink of the pink roses on the balcony."

"Is this the one?" asked Marcello, taking up from the floor the finest and largest of the dolls.

"You see, you don't know anything about it," she said severely. She jumped out of bed, ran barefoot to one corner of the carpet, and picking up an extremely ugly rag doll with a squashed and blackened face, hurried back to bed again, saying, "There you are!" This time she lay down quietly under the sheet, on her back, her rosy, placid face pressed affectionately against the dirty, surprised-looking face of the doll. Giulia came in again with a bottle and a spoon.

"Come along," she said, going up to the bed, "take your medicine." The little girl obeyed promptly. She sat half up in the bed, stretching out her face with her mouth open, like a little bird about to be fed. Giulia put the spoon into her mouth, then tilted it quickly to let the liquid run out. The child lay down again, saying, "How nasty it is!"

"Well, good night," said Giulia stooping to kiss her daughter.

"Good night, Mummy, good night, Daddy," said the child in her shrill voice. Marcello kissed her on the cheek and then followed his wife. Giulia turned out the light and closed the door.

In the passage, she half turned toward her husband and said, "I think it's ready." Marcello then noticed, for the first time, in that revealing dimness, that Giulia's eyes were swollen as if with weeping. His visit to the child had cheered him; but when he saw his wife's eyes, he began to be afraid again that he would not be able to appear as calm and firm as he wished. Giulia had gone on in front of him into the dining room, an extremely small room with a little round table and a sideboard.

ness?" His answer, at that time—if he had the gift of prophecy—would have been, "Kill Quadri." But now? He put down the fork at the side of his plate, and as soon as he could be sure that his voice would not tremble, answered, "I don't understand what you're talking about."

He saw her lower her eyes, with a grimace as though she were weeping. Then she said, in a slow, sad voice, "Lina told me in Paris—perhaps because she wanted to get me away from you—that you were in the Secret Police."

"And what did you answer her?"

"That it didn't matter to me if you were . . . that I was your wife and that I loved you, whatever you did . . . that if you were doing that, it meant you thought it was the right thing to do."

Marcello said nothing, deeply moved, in spite of himself, by this obtuse, unshakable loyalty. Giulia continued, in a hesitating voice, "But then, when Quadri and Lina were killed, I was terrified that you had something to do with it . . . and I've never been able to stop thinking about it. . . But I never said anything to you because, as you'd never told me anything about your profession, I thought there was all the more reason why I couldn't speak about *this*."

"And what d'you think now?" asked Marcello after a moment's silence.

"What do I think?" said Giulia, raising her eyes and looking at him. Marcello saw that her eyes were shining, and he knew that those tears already gave him his answer. She added, however, with an effort, "You yourself told me in Paris that the visit to Quadri was very important for your career. . . So I think it may be true."

He answered at once, "It is true."

He realized, simultaneously, that Giulia had been hoping, up to the very last moment, that he would contradict her. And indeed, at his words, as though they had been a signal, she threw her head down on the table, buried her face in her arm and started sobbing. Marcello got up, went over to the door and turned the key. Then he went up to her, and without bending down placed his hand on her hair and said, "If you like, we'll separate, from tomorrow on. . . I'll take you and the child to Tagliacozzo and

then I'll go away and you needn't see me any more. . . D'you think that would be the best thing?"

Giulia at once stopped sobbing—just as though, it seemed to him, she had not been able to believe her own ears. Then, from the hollow of her arm, where her face was hidden, came her voice, sad and surprised, "Whatever do you mean? Separate? . . . It's not that . . . but I'm so frightened for you. . . What will they do to you now?"

So Giulia, he said to himself, felt no horror of him, nor did she feel regret for the deaths of Quadri and Lina; it was merely fear on his behalf, fear for his life, for his future. Such insensibility, coupled with such love, affected him strangely; it was like going upstairs in the dark and lifting your foot, thinking to find another step, and instead finding only emptiness because you have reached a landing. He had, in reality, foreseen and even hoped for a feeling of horror and a severe verdict from her. Instead of which, he found only the usual blind, loyal love. Somewhat impatiently, he said, "They won't do anything to me. . . There are no proofs . . . and in any case I was only carrying out orders." He hesitated a moment, feeling a kind of bashfulness, mixed with repugnance, for the commonplace remark; then, with an effort, concluded, "I only did my duty, just as a soldier would."

Giulia quickly snatched at this worn and hackneyed phrase which, not so long ago, had not sufficed to tranquillize even Orlando, the Secret Service man. "Yes, I thought of that," she said, lifting her head and then seizing his hand and kissing it frantically, "I always said to myself, 'Marcello, after all, is just like a soldier. . . Soldiers, also, kill because they're ordered to do so. . . It's no fault of his if they make him do certain things. . . But don't you really think they'll come and take you away? . . . I'm sure the people who gave you the orders will escape . . . and that you, on the other hand, you who have nothing to do with it and who only did your duty will be the one to suffer. . .'" After having kissed the back of his hand she turned it over and started kissing the palm with equal fury.

"Don't worry," said Marcello, stroking her head, "for

the present they'll have other things to do besides looking for me."

"But people are so dreadful. . . If there's even just one person who hates you . . . they'll denounce you. . . Besides, it's always like that. The big people, the ones who give orders and who've made millions, get away; while the little ones like you, who have done their duty and haven't saved a penny, are the ones who suffer. . . Oh Marcello, I'm so frightened."

"You mustn't be frightened, everything will come right."

"Ah, but I know it won't come right. I feel it. . . And I'm so tired." Giulia spoke now with her face pressed against his hand, but no longer kissing it. "After Lucilla arrived, although I knew what your profession was, I used to think: now I'm properly established, I've got a baby, a husband that I love, I've got a home and a family, I'm happy, truly happy. . . It was the first time in my life that I'd been happy and it seemed too good to be true. . . I could hardly believe it . . . and I was always so much afraid that everything would come to an end and that the happiness wouldn't last. . . And indeed it hasn't lasted, and now we've got to run away. . . And you'll lose your job and goodness knows what they'll do to you. . . And that poor little creature will be worse off than if she was an orphan. . . And everything will have to be started all over again. . . And perhaps it won't even be possible to start again and our family life will be broken up." She burst into tears and buried her face in her arm again.

All of a sudden Marcello recalled the image that had flashed across his mind earlier—the divine rod pitilessly smiting his whole family, himself, the guilty one, and his wife, and child who were innocent, and he shuddered at the thought. There was a knock at the door and he shouted to the servant that they had finished and didn't need her any more. Then, bending down towards Giulia, he said gently, "Please don't go on crying, and don't worry. . . Our family life won't be broken up. . . We'll go away to America, or to Argentina, and make a new life for ourselves. . . We'll have a home there, and I'll be there, and

Lucilla. . . Be brave, and you'll see everything will be all right."

Giulia now raised her tear-stained eyes at him and, filled with sudden hope, said: "But when can we go?"

"As soon as possible. . . As soon as we can get over."

"And in the meantime?"

"In the meantime we'll stay here. . . and stay at Tagliacozzo."

. . . You'll see, everything will be all right."

Giulia seemed cheerful. . . Marcello thought, as he saw the firm tone in which she said, "It's silly of me to be sorry," she said. "It's silly of me to be sorry, and all I can do is to set the table, taking the dishes one by one from the sideboard."

Marcello walked over to the window, looked out. Through the open door of the building opposite, floor after floor, the staircase lights shone brightly. In the dark courtyards the shadows thickened. The night was still and hot, and even then the only sound to be heard was the dripping of the hose with which, down in the darkness of the courtyard, someone was watering the flower beds. . . and said, "Shall we take the car and drive away?"

"Why?" she asked. "What's the point of it? . . . The world knows what the crowds must be like."

"You could witness," he replied, "the fall of a dictatorship."

"There's Lucilla. . . I can't leave her alone. . . posing the airplanes come?"

"Don't worry, they won't come tonight."

"But why go into town?" she suddenly asked. "I don't understand you. . . D'you suffer? . . . What pleasure?"

"You say, then," he said.

"No, then I'll come with you."

happens to you, I'd rather be there. . . After all, the maid can see to the child."

"But don't be afraid . . . the planes won't come tonight."

"I'm going to change," she said, leaving the room.

Left alone, Marcello crossed over to the window again. There was somebody going down the stairs in the opposite building,—a man. The dark outline of his figure could be seen through the opaque window panes, descending slowly from floor to floor. He walked down in a self-possessed sort of way, to judge by the slenderness of his outline. He must be a young man thought Marcello enviously, he was whistling. Then the radio started to blare again. Marcello heard the usual voice winding up, as if at the end of a speech, with the words, ". . . the war continues." It was the message of the new government, that he had already heard shortly before. He took out his case and lit a cigarette.

CHAPTER 20

THE suburban streets were deserted, silent, dark, as though dead, like the extremities of some large body whose blood has suddenly collected all in one spot. But as the car drew nearer to the center of the city Marcello and Giulia saw more and more groups of people gesticulating and shouting. At a crossroad Marcello slowed down and stopped while a line of trucks went past, packed with boys and young women waving flags and placards with slogans on them. These overloaded, flag-decked trucks with people clinging to the mudguards and the footboards were greeted with confused applause by the crowds thronging the pavements. Someone stuck his head in at the window of Marcello's car and shouted "Long live Freedom!" in Giulia's face, disappearing immediately afterward as though sucked back into the multitude that swarmed all

around. Giulia said, "Wouldn't it be better to go back home?"

"Why?" replied Marcello, surveying the street through the glass of the windshield. "They're all so pleased. . . They're certainly not thinking of doing any harm to any one. . . We'll leave the car somewhere and then walk about and see what's going on."

"Won't they steal the car?"

"Don't be absurd."

Marcello drove the car through the crowded streets in the center of the town in his usual thoughtful, composed, patient manner. In spite of the gloom of the black-out it was possible to distinguish quite clearly the movements of the crowd, with groups of people forming and groups encountering each other and then scattering and running here and there—all the movements shifting and varying, yet all animated by the same single, sincere exultation at the fall of the dictatorship. People who did not know each other embraced in the middle of the street. Here someone, after standing still for a long time, dumb and attentive, as a flag-decked truck drove past, suddenly took off his hat and yelled applause; there someone was running like a dispatch-bearer, from group to group, repeating phrases of encouragement and rejoicing; someone else, seized with a sudden fury of hatred, lifted a threatening fist at a dark, closed building that had been the seat of some public office. Marcello noticed there were large numbers of women on their husbands' arms, sometimes with their children too—a thing that had not happened for a long time, in the forced public manifestations of the fallen regime. Columns of determined-looking men, united, apparently, by some secret party bond, formed and marched past for a moment or two amid applause, and then seemed to be lost in the crowd: large, approving groups surrounded any impromptu orator; others gathered to sing hymns of freedom at the top of their voices. Marcello drove gently and patiently respecting each concourse of people and advancing very slowly. "How pleased they all are!" said Giulia, in a good-natured, companionable tone, forgetting both her fears and her own interests.

"In their place I should be too."

They went some distance up the Corso, through the crowd, following two or three other slowly moving cars; then, at a narrow side street, Marcello turned, and, after waiting for a column of demonstrators to pass, managed to drive into it. He drove on quickly into another completely deserted lane behind the side street, stopped, switched off the engine, and turning to his wife, said, "Let's get out."

Giulia got out without a word, and Marcello, having carefully locked the doors of the car, walked with her toward the street they had recently left. He felt completely calm now, completely detached and master of himself, just as he had desired to be during the whole of that day. He kept a careful watch on himself, however; and as he came out again into the crowded street and the joy of the throng exploded in his face its tumultuous rush of aggressive sincerity, he immediately asked, not without anxiety, whether this joy did not arouse in his mind some feeling that was far from serene. No, he thought, after a moment of careful self-examination, he felt neither regret, nor scorn, nor fear. He was truly calm, apathetic, dead, and he was ready to contemplate other people's joy without sharing in it but also without resenting it as a threat or an affront.

They started wandering about aimlessly among the crowd, from one group to another, from one side of the street to the other. Giulia was no longer frightened now, and appeared, like him, to be quite calm and self-possessed; but this, he knew, was because of her good-natured capacity for identifying herself with other people's feelings. The crowd, instead of diminishing, seemed to increase each moment. It was a crowd, Marcello noticed, almost wholly joyful, with a joy that was amazed and incredulous and awkward at expressing itself, and not yet quite sure that it would do so with impunity. More trucks, forcing their way with difficulty through the multitude, moved past laden with working-class people, both men and women, waving flags, some of them tricolor, some red. A small German open car went past, with two officers lolling quietly back in their seats and a soldier in battle dress sitting on the edge of the door holding a

Tommy gun: whistles and sneering cries rose from the pavements. Marcello noticed that there were numbers of soldiers about, very much at their ease and carrying no arms, but embracing each other, their stolid peasant faces lit up with a kind of inebriate hopefulness. The first time he saw two of these soldiers walking along with their arms round each other's waists like two lovers, their bayonets bouncing up and down against their unbuttoned tunics. Marcello found they produced in him a feeling very much like scorn: they were men in uniform, and for him uniform meant, inexorably, decorum and dignity, whatever the feelings of its wearer might be. Giulia, as though guessing his thoughts, pointed at the two affectionate untidy soldiers and asked him, "Didn't they say the war was to continue?"

"They said so," answered Marcello, admitting himself suddenly, and with a painful effort of comprehension, to be in the wrong, "but it isn't true. . . Those poor fellows are quite right to be pleased: for them the war really over."

In front of the great door of the Ministry to which Marcello had gone for his orders the day before he left for Paris, there was a great crowd of people protesting and shouting and waving their fists in the air. Those nearest the door were beating upon it with their hands and demanding that it should be opened. The name of the now fallen Minister was being loudly repeated, in a tone of particular loathing and disgust, by many of those in the crowd. Marcello watched this concourse of people for some time without understanding what the demonstrators wanted. At last the door was very slightly opened and in the crack appeared a pale, imploring commissioner in a braided uniform. He said something to those nearest to him, somebody went in the door that was immediately closed again, the crowd yelled again for a little and then dispersed, but not entirely, for a few obstinate people remained, still knocking at the closed door and still shouting.

They left the Ministry and went on into the adjoining square. A shout of "Make way, make way!" caused the crowd to fall back and them with it. Stretching his hands

forward, Marcello saw three or four rough youths coming along, pulling behind them by a rope a large bust of the Dictator. The bust was bronze in color but was really of painted plaster, as one saw from a number of white chips caused by the violent way in which they bounced it over the paving stones. A little dark man, his face almost hidden behind a huge pair of tortoise-shell spectacles, looked at the bust and then turned toward Marcello and said, laughing, in a sententious voice, "It looked like bronze but really it was just vulgar chalk." Marcello did not answer, and for a moment, craning his neck, he stared intently at the bust while it went bouncing heavily along in front of him. It was a bust like hundreds of others placed here and there in ministries and public offices—coarsely stylized, with jaw thrust out, eyes round and hollow, smooth, swollen cranium. He could not but reflect how that mouth of sham bronze, image of another, living mouth once so arrogant, was now trailing in the dust amid the sneers and whistles of the same crowd that had once so warmly acclaimed it. Again Giulia seemed to guess his thoughts, for she murmured, "Just think, once upon a time a bust like that in a waiting room was all that was needed to make people lower their voices!"

He answered drily, "If they had him here now, in the flesh, they'd do the same to him as they're doing to that bust."

"D'you think they'll kill him?"

"Certainly, if they can."

They walked on a little farther, through the crowd that jostled and swirled in the darkness like turbulent, unstable flood-water. At one street corner a group of people had put up a long ladder at the corner of a building, and a man who had climbed to the top of the ladder was hammering vigorously at a stone that bore the name of the regime. Someone said with a laugh to Marcello, "There are Fascist signs everywhere . . . it'll take years to efface them all."

"It certainly will," said Marcello.

They crossed the square and made their way through the crowd to the arcade. It was almost in darkness, but by the dim light of the blacked-out lamps they came upon a

what it wanted. There was more curiosity than enthusiasm: just as people had previously assembled, as though to watch some spectacle, in order to see and hear the Dictator, so now they wanted to see and hear whoever it was who had overthrown the Dictator. As the car moved gently round the square, Giulia asked in a low voice, "Will the King really come out on the balcony?"

Before answering, Marcello twisted his head round to take a look at the balcony through the glass of the windshield. It was feebly illuminated by the reddish light of a couple of torches, and in between them they saw the closed window shutter. Then he replied, "I don't suppose so. . . Why should he?"

"Then what are all these people waiting for?"

"Nothing at all. . . It's just the habit of going into a piazza and calling for somebody."

Marcello circled very slowly round the square; it was as though he were politely pushing the reluctant groups of people out of his way with the fenders. Giulia said, quite unexpectedly, "D'you know, I feel almost disappointed?"

"Why?"

"I thought they'd be doing something or other—burning houses, killing people. . . When we came out I was afraid for you, and that was why I came. . . But there's nothing—nothing but yelling and clapping, Long live this and down with that, and singing and marching. . ."

Marcello could not refrain from answering, "The worst is yet to come."

"What d'you mean?" she demanded in a frightened voice. "For us, or for the others?"

"For us *and* for the others."

He immediately regretted having spoken when he felt Giulia seize his arm violently, in distress. "I knew all the time," she said, "that what you were telling me wasn't true—when you said that everything would come right. . . And now you're saying the same yourself."

"Don't be frightened. . . I was only just talking."

Giulia said no more; but she held tightly to his arm with both hands and pressed herself against him. Embarrassed, but unwilling to repel her, Marcello drove the car back through side streets toward the Corso. Once

there, he continued to follow the less frequented streets and at last reached the Piazza del Popolo, and from there continued his way up the steep slope of the Pincio towards Villa Borghese. Crossing the Pincio, dark and peopled only by marble busts, they followed the riding-track in the direction of Via Veneto. When they came to the entrance at Porta Pinciana, G

in among the trees, whispered, "Come and let's make love here. . . . on the ground."

"No, really," Marcello could not help exclaiming, "here?"

"Yes, here," she said. "Why not? . . . Come, I want it, so as to feel reassured."

"Reassured about what?"

"Everyone thinks about war, and politics, and air raids—when they could really be so happy. . . . Come on. . . . Why, I'd do it right in the middle of one of their public squares," she added with sudden exasperation, "if only to show that I, at least, am capable of thinking about something else. . . . Come on."

She seemed now to be in a state of exaltation, and went in front of him into the thick darkness among the tree-trunks. "You see what a lovely bedroom," he heard her murmur. "Soon we shan't have a home at all . . . but this is a bedroom they can't ever take away from us. . . . We can sleep and make love here as often as we like." All of a sudden she vanished, as though she had sunk into the earth. Marcello looked about and then caught sight of her in the darkness, lying on the ground at the foot of a tree, one arm pillowing her head, the other raised toward him in silent invitation to lie down beside her. He did so, and no sooner was he there than Giulia twined her arms and legs tightly round him, kissing him all over his face with a blind, slow energy, as though she were seeking, on his brow and cheeks, other mouths through which she might penetrate into him. But almost at once her embrace slackened, and Marcello saw her half raise herself above him, gazing into the darkness. "Someone's coming," she said.

Marcello, too, sat up and looked. Through the trees, still some way off, the light of a pocket lamp swayed as it advanced and threw a feeble circular glimmer on the ground in front of it. There was no sound, for the thick carpet of dead leaves dulled the footsteps of the unknown person. The lamp advanced in their direction, and Giulia quickly composed herself and sat up, throwing her arms round her knees. Sitting side by side with their

the tree, they watched the light approach. "It must be the park-keeper," murmured Giulia.

The lamp was now shining on the ground at a short distance from them; then it was raised and its rays fell upon them. Dazzled, they gazed at the dim, shadowy figure of the man from whose fist the white light issued. The light, thought Marcello, would surely be lowered, but the park-keeper had taken a good look at them. But the light continued to shine full in their faces as they stared at them in a silence that seemed, to Marcello, fraught with astonishment and speculation. "May I know what you want with us?" he then demanded in a reserved tone.

"I don't want anything, Marcello," replied a gentle voice at once. At the same time the light was lowered and began to move away from them.

"Who is it?" murmured Giulia. "He seems to know you."

Marcello sat motionless, not daring to breathe, profoundly disturbed. Then he said to his wife, "Forgive me one moment. . . I'll be back at once." He jumped to his feet and pursued the unknown man.

He caught up with him at the edge of the garden beside the pedestal of one of the white marble statues. There was a lamppost not far off, and as the man turned and the sound of his footsteps he recognized him immediately, even after all those years, by the smooth, ascetic face beneath his brushlike hair. He had seen him before in a close-fitting chauffeur's tunic; and now, too, he was wearing a uniform—black, buttoned up to the neck, with breeches and black leather gaiters. He held his cap under his arm and grasped the pocket lamp in his hand. He stopped at once, with a smile, "People who don't die always reappear."

The remark seemed to Marcello to be altogether well suited to the circumstances, although it was manifestly as a joke and was perhaps unconscious. Breathless with agitation and with running, he said, "But I thought you were dead. . . I thought I'd killed you."

"I hoped you knew that they'd saved me, Marcello," answered Lino quietly. "It's true that one paper

"You're ashamed to introduce me as your fiancée," I then said. "If you like I'll go."

I knew this was the only way to wring an affectionate gesture out of him: by blackmailing him with the accusation that he was ashamed of me. And, as I had expected, he immediately put his arm round my waist.

"I suggested it!" he exclaimed. "Why should I be ashamed of you?"

"I don't know. I can see you're in a bad temper."

"I'm not in a bad temper, I'm dazed," he answered, in a tone of voice that was almost scientific. "And that's because we've made love. Give me time to get over it."

I noticed he was still very pale and was smoking without any enjoyment.

"You're right," I said. "I'm sorry. But you're always so cold and off-putting that you make me lose my head. If you were different, I would not have insisted on staying a moment ago."

He threw his cigarette down.

"I'm not cold and off-putting," he said.

"And yet—"

"I like you immensely," he continued, looking at me attentively, "and I didn't resist you a little while ago as I meant to." This phrase delighted me and I lowered my eyes without speaking. "Still, I suppose you're right, really, and this can't be called love."

My heart stood still and I could not help murmuring, "What do you mean by love, then?"

"If I had loved you," he replied, "I would not have wanted to send you away a moment ago. And then I wouldn't have been angry when you wanted to stay."

"Were you angry?"

"Yes—and now I'd be chatting to you, I'd be cheerful, gay, witty, amusing, I'd be making plans for the future—isn't that how love is?"

"Yes," I said softly. "At least, these are the effects of love."

He was silent for some time and then spoke without any feeling of complacency, with arid humility. "I do

everything in the same way; without loving what I'm doing or experiencing it in my heart—knowing intellectually how to do it and occasionally even doing it, but always coldly and externally. That's how I am, and apparently I can't be otherwise."

I made a great effort to control myself.

"I like you as you are," I said. "Don't worry." And I embraced him most affectionately. Almost at the same instant, the door opened and the old servant looked in to tell us dinner was ready.

We left the sitting room and went along a passage to the dining room. I remember all the details of that room and the people in it perfectly, because I was as sensitive to impressions at that time as a photographic plate. I felt I was not so much acting as watching myself act, with wide, melancholy eyes. Perhaps this is the direct result of the feeling of rebellion we experience when faced with a reality that causes us to suffer, while at the same time we wish it were otherwise.

I don't know why, but Signora Medolaghi, the widow, seemed to me to resemble closely the furniture in black ebony with mother-of-pearl inlay in her parlor. She was a middle-aged woman, imposingly tall, with a voluminous bosom and massive hips. She was dressed entirely in black silk, had a broad, flabby face, whose pallor was like mother-of-pearl, framed in black hair that was obviously dyed, and had huge, dark shadows under her eyes. She was standing in front of a flowered soup tureen and was serving the soup with a kind of disdain. The weighted lamp that had been pulled down over the table lit up her bosom—which was very like a large, black shiny parcel—and left her face in shadow. In that shadow her white face with its black-ringed eyes recalled the little silk masks worn during carnival. The table was small and four places were laid, one on each side. The daughter of the house was already seated in her place and did not get up when we entered.

"The young lady can sit here," said the widow Medolaghi. "What's your name?"

"You're ashamed to introduce me as your fiancée," I then said. "If you like I'll go."

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ness from someone who has already been infected. The two Medolaghi women were certainly not rich, otherwise they would not have let rooms. Being conscious of their poverty but unwilling to admit it, my presence as a poor girl wearing no mask seemed both dangerous and insulting to them. Who can say what passed through the daughter's mind as I addressed her? . . . This girl is talking to me, she wants to be friendly, I shan't be able to get rid of her. . . . I realized all these things in a flash and decided not to utter another word until the end of the meal.

But her mother, who was possibly more curious and had an easier manner, did not want to give up all interest of some conversation. "I didn't know you were engaged," she said to Mino. "How long have you been engaged?"

Her voice was affected and she spoke from behind a mass of her bosom as if from behind a protective screen.

"About a month," said Mino. This was true, we had known one another for only a month.

"Is the young lady a Roman?"

"Indeed she is, seven generations back."

"And when is the wedding to be?"

"Soon—as soon as the house we are to live in is free."

"Oh, you've already got a house in mind?"

"Yes, a little villa with a garden—and a little town. It's charming."

This was the sardonic way in which he described the little villa I had pointed out to him on the main road near my own flat.

"If we wait for that house," I said, with an effort, "I am afraid we'll never get married."

"Nonsense," said Mino cheerfully. He seemed quite recovered and even had more color in his cheeks. "You know it's to be free on the day we fixed."

I do not like jokes so I said nothing. The mother changed the plates. "Villas, Mr. Diolati," said Signora Medolaghi, "are all very well but they aren't convenient. You need a lot of servants."

"Yes," said Mino. "That won't be necessary. Adm-

will be cook, parlormaid, housekeeper, won't you, Adriana?"

Signora Medolaghi summed me up with a glance. "Really," she said, "a lady has something else to do besides thinking of cooking and sweeping and making beds. But if the young lady is accustomed to do it, in that case—" She did not finish her sentence and turned her attention to the plate the parlormaid was offering me. "We didn't know you were coming; we could only add another egg or two."

I was angry with Mino and with the lady and was almost tempted to reply, "No, I'm accustomed to walking the streets." But Mino, who was bubbling over with a crazy kind of gaiety, poured himself out a generous glassful of wine, poured some for me—Signora Medolaghi's eyes followed the bottle uneasily—and continued. "Oh, but Adriana's not a lady! And she never will be—Adriana's always made beds and swept floors. Adriana's a common girl."

Signora Medolaghi looked at me as if she were seeing me for the first time. "Exactly as I was saying—if she's accustomed—" she repeated, with offensive politeness. Her daughter bowed her head over her plate.

"Yes, she is," went on Mino, "and I'm certainly not going to be the one to make her give up such useful habits. Adriana's a shirtmaker's daughter and a shirtmaker herself—aren't you, Adriana?" He stretched his arm across the table, seized my hand and turned it over, palm upwards. "She paints her nails, I know, but it's the hand of a working girl—big, strong, unaffected—like her hair, curly but rebellious, coarse at the roots." He let my hand fall and pulled my hair hard, like an animal's. "Adriana, in fact, is in everything and everywhere a worthy representative of our fine, healthy and vigorous people."

There was an echo of a sarcastic challenge in his voice; but no one took it up. The daughter looked through me, as if I were transparent and she were looking at some object behind me. The mother ordered the maid to

change the plates, then, turning to Mino, asked him in an entirely unexpected fashion, "So, Mr. Diodati, did you go to see that play?"

I almost burst into laughter at her clumsy way of changing the subject. Mino, however, did not lose face. "Don't mention it!" he exclaimed. "It was rotten."

"We're going tomorrow. They say it's an excellent company."

Mino replied that the actors were not as good as the papers said; the mistress was astonished that the paper should lie. Mino replied calmly that the papers were one lie from beginning to end; and from that moment the conversation dealt with similar matters. As soon as one of these themes of conversation was exhausted Signora Medolaghi started another, with poorly concealed haste. Mino, who seemed highly amused, acted up to her and replied smartly. They talked of actors, night life in Rome, cafés, movies, theatres, hotels and so on. They were like two pingpong players, intent on returning the ball to one another without letting it drop. But while Mino did it out of his usual love of comedy, which was so highly developed, Signora Medolaghi did it in fear and disgust at me and anything connected with me. She seemed to imply by her formal, conventional talk "This is my way of telling you how shocking it is to marry a common girl, and in any case how shocking it is to bring her to the house of the widow of the civil servant Medolaghi." The daughter said nothing and seemed to be longing quite openly for the meal to come to an end and for me to be gone as quickly as possible.

For a while I found some amusement in following the conversational skirmish, but I soon got tired of it and was utterly overwhelmed by the sadness in my heart. I realized that Mino did not love me, and the knowledge was bitter. Besides, I noticed that Mino had made use of my confidence in him to build up his comedy of an engagement, and I could not quite understand whether he had won a fool of me, of the two women, or of his

was as if he, too, had nourished in his heart the same aspirations towards a normal, decent life as I had, and had given up all hope of being able to fulfill them, for different reasons from mine. On the other hand, I understood that his praise of me as a girl of the people in no way flattered me or the common people—it had been nothing more than a means of making himself unpleasant to the two women. These observations brought home to me the truth of what he had been saying shortly before—that he was incapable of loving with his heart. Never had I understood so well as at that moment that everything is love, and that everything depends on love. This love either was or was not. If there was love, then one loved not only one's own lover but all people and all things, as I did; but if there was no love, one loved nobody and nothing—as in his case. And the absence of love finally caused incapacity and impotence.

The table had been cleared by now and in the circle of light shed by the chandelier onto the tablecloth sprinkled with crumbs stood four coffee cups, a tulip-shaped terra-cotta ash tray, and a large mottled hand, adorned with several cheap rings, which held a burning cigarette, Signora Medolaghi's hand. My bosom suddenly swelled with impatience and I rose to my feet. "I'm sorry, Mino," I said, deliberately exaggerating the Roman accent I had, "but I'm busy. . . . I've got to go."

He crushed out his cigarette in the ash tray and also rose to his feet. I said a ringing good evening, just like any girl of the people would, made a slight bow which Signora Medolaghi returned stiffly and the daughter ignored, and then I left. In the entrance I spoke to Mino. "I'm afraid Signora Medolaghi will ask you to look out for another room after this evening."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I don't think so. I pay her well, and very punctually."

"I'm going," I said. "This meal has made me unhappy."

"Why?"

"Because I've become quite convinced at last that you are incapable of love."

I said this sadly, without looking at him. Then I closed my eyes. I thought he looked embarrassed, but perhaps it was the shadow in the hall on his pale face. I suddenly felt full of remorse. "Are you cross?" I asked. "No," he said with an effort, "it's the truth, after all." My heart overflowed with affection for him, I embraced him impulsively. "It isn't true. . . . I only said so out of spite. And anyway, I love you so much all the time. . . . Look—I brought you this tie." I opened my bag, took out the tie and offered it to him. He looked at it.

"Did you steal it?" he asked.

It was only a joke and, I understood later, revealed more heartfelt fondness for me than the warmest thanks could have done. But at that moment it pierced me to the heart. My eyes filled with tears. "No, I bought it—a shop just down below," I stammered.

He noticed my humiliation and embraced me. "Silence," he said. "I was only joking. But in any case, I'd like even if you had stolen it—perhaps even more."

"Wait, I'll put it on for you," I said, feeling slightly annoyed. He lifted his chin and I undid his old tie, turned back his collar and knotted the new one for him.

"I'm going to take this horrid old worn-out tie away," he said. "You mustn't ever wear it again." What I really wanted was to have some memory of him, something he had worn.

"I'll see you soon, then," he said.

"When?"

"Tomorrow, after supper."

"Very well." I took his hand and made as if to kiss it. He pulled it away, but was not in time to prevent me from pushing it with my lips. Without looking back, I ran hastily down the stairs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AFTER THAT DAY, I went on leading my usual life. I really loved Mino, and more than once I felt tempted to give up my profession, so complete a contrast to real love. But despite the fact that I had fallen in love, my condition remained unaltered, I was still at the same point: that is to say, I had no money and no possibility of earning any except in that way. I did not want to accept money from Mino; but in any case he had only a limited amount, since his family only sent him barely enough to pay for his keep in town. I must admit at this point that I always felt an irresistible desire to pay the bill myself in all the places, cafés and restaurants we frequented. He always refused my offers and every time I was disappointed. When he had no money, he took me to the public parks and we sat together chatting on a bench and watching the passers-by, like two poor people.

"But if you haven't any money," I said to him one day, "let's go to a café all the same. I'll pay . . . what difference does it make?"

"It's out of the question."

"Why? I want to go to a café and have a drink."

"Go by yourself, then."

As a matter of fact, I was not so keen on going to a café as on paying for him. I had a deep, obstinate and painful desire to do so; and I would have liked to have handed all the money I earned straight over to him, rather than do all the paying myself, little by little as I received it from the birds of passage who were my lovers. I imagined that in this way only could I show him my love; but I also supposed that if I kept him financially I would bind him to me with a bond stronger than that of mere affection. "I'd be so pleased to give you some money," I said to him on another occasion. "And I'm sure it would give you some pleasure to have it!"

He began to laugh. "Our relationship, as far as I'm concerned at least, is not based on pleasure!"

"On what, then?"

He hesitated. "On your will to love me," he then replied, "and on my weakness in the face of this will of yours; but that doesn't mean my weakness has no limits."

"How do you mean?"

"It's very simple," he said coolly, "and I've explained it to you over and over again—we're together because you willed it so. I, on the contrary, did not, and even now, in theory at least, I would rather not—"

"That'll do," I interrupted, "don't let's talk about our love. I shouldn't have mentioned it."

Often since, when thinking over his character, I have regretfully come to the conclusion that he did not love me at all, and that I was only the object of some experiment of his. In point of fact, he was interested only in himself; but within these limits his character was extremely complicated. He was a lad of a well-to-do provincial family, as I believe I have already said, delicate, intelligent, cultured, well-mannered, serious. His family, as far as I could make out from the little he told me, for he was not fond of talking about it, was one of those families I would have liked to have been born into. It was a traditional family: his father was a doctor and landowner, his mother was still young and stayed at home most of the time thinking only of her husband and children; there were three younger sisters and an elder brother. The father was admittedly a busybody and an authority in local affairs, his mother was extremely bigoted, his sisters rather frivolous and his elder brother quite a young man about town, like Giancarlo. But when all was said and done these faults were all bearable and for me, who had been born among people whose way of life was so different, they did not even seem and all of the Mino.

My own feeling was that he was very lucky in having such a family. But he, on the contrary, seemed to feel an aversion, a dislike and disgust for them which I found quite incomprehensible. And he seemed to feel the same aversion, dislike and disgust for himself, what he was and what he did. But this self-hatred appeared to be only a reflection of his hatred for his whole family. In other words, he seemed to hate in himself all that part of him which had remained attached to his family or had in any way come under the influence of the family circle. I have said he was well-mannered, cultured, intelligent, delicate, serious. But he despised his intelligence, manners, culture, delicacy, seriousness, merely because he suspected that he owed them to the milieu and the family into which he had been born and where he had grown up. "But really," I said to him once, "what would you like to be? These are all fine qualities—you ought to thank your lucky stars that you have them."

"A fine lot of use they are to me!" he said, scarcely moving his lips. "Speaking for myself—I'd have preferred to be like Sonzogno."

He had been deeply impressed by the story of Sonzogno, I can't imagine for what reason. "How dreadful!" I exclaimed. "He's a monster, and you want to be like him!"

"Obviously I wouldn't want to be like Sonzogno in every respect," he explained. "I mentioned Sonzogno merely to make my meaning clear. Sonzogno is acclimated to life in this world of ours, and I'm not."

"Do you want to know what I would like to have been?" I then asked him.

"Tell me."

"I would have liked," I said slowly, savoring the phrases in each of which one of my most cherished dreams seemed to be embodied, "to have been just what you are and what you are so unhappy at being. I would have liked to have been born into a family as well-to-do as yours, which would have given me a good education. I would have liked to have lived in a lovely, clean house

I would have liked to have had good teachers
n governesses, as you had. I would have liked
ent the summer at the seaside or in the moun-
to have had good clothes, and be invited out
ceive guests. And then I would have liked to
neone who loved me, a decent fellow who
id was well-to-do, too, and I would have liked
th him and bear his children."

He was lying on the bed as we talked. Suddenly he
on me, as was his way, clutching me and shak-
he repeated, "Hurray, hurray, hurray! In fact,
I would like to be like Signora Lobianco."

"Is Signora Lobianco?" I asked, both offended
and interested.

"A terrible harpy who often invites me to her recep-
tacles with the hope that I'll fall in love with one of her
daughters and marry her, because I'm what's
called a good match."

"I wouldn't like to be at all like Mrs. Lobianco!"
"That's what you'd certainly be if you had all the
things you mentioned. Signora Lobianco was born into
a rich family who gave her an excellent education—
good teachers and foreign governesses, sent her to
London and even to the university, I believe. She, too,
lived in a lovely, clean house; she, too, went to the
seaside or the mountains every summer; she, too, had
beautiful clothes and was invited out and gave parties—
sent out invitations and lots of parties; she, too, married
a rich fellow, Lobianco the engineer, who works and
brings a great deal of money into the house. And she
has a number of children by this husband of hers—
four, I even believe she has been faithful—three
daughters and a son, but despite all this she's a terrible
harpy, as I said."

"There must be a harpy out there somewhere."

"Things?"

"No, she

is my friend

Mayb

astic embrace, "but everyone's got their own character. Maybe Signora Lobianco's a harpy, but I'm sure that under those conditions I'd have turned out far better than I am."

"You'd have turned out no less horrible than la Lobianco."

"Why?"

"Because."

"But, look here, do you think your family's horrible, too?"

"Of course, loathsome."

"And are you horrible too?"

"Yes, in everything I've got from my family."

"But why? Tell me why!"

"Because."

"That's not an answer."

"It's the same answer Mrs. Lobianco would give you if you asked her certain questions," he replied.

"What questions?"

"We needn't mention them," he said lightly. "Embarrassing questions—a 'because' said with conviction out of the mouth of even the most curious person—'because,' for no reason—'because'—"

"I don't understand."

"What does it matter if we don't understand each other, as long as we love each other—which is true?" he concluded, embracing me in his ironical and loveless fashion. And so the discussion ended. For just as he never gave himself up completely, emotionally speaking, and always seemed to keep something back, perhaps the most important part, so that his rare outbursts of affection were valueless, in exactly the same way he never revealed the whole of what he was thinking. Every time I believed I had reached the very core of his intelligence, he repelled me with some joke or amusing trick, to distract my attention. He really was elusive, in every sense. And he treated me as an inferior. But perhaps it was for this very reason that I loved him so much and in such a helpless and submissive fashion.

own family and his own milieu, but all mankind. One day he remarked—I cannot remember in what connection, "The rich are appalling, but the poor certainly aren't any better, if for different reasons."

"You'd be a bit nearer the mark if you admitted frankly that you hate all mankind without exception."

He began to laugh. "In the abstract," he replied "when I'm not among them I don't hate them; at least I hate them so little that I believe in their progress. If I didn't believe this, I wouldn't trouble myself with politics. But when I'm among them they horrify me. Really," he added sadly, "mankind is worthless."

"We're people," I said, "and therefore we're worthless, too, and therefore we have no right to judge."

He laughed again. "I don't judge them," he replied "I smell them—or rather, I sniff them—like a dog sniffs the scent of a partridge or a hare. But does the dog judge them? I sniff them and I find they're malicious, stupid, selfish, petty, vulgar, decent, shameful, full of filth. It's a feeling; but we can't suppress feelings, can we?"

I did not know what to reply and contented myself with saying, "I haven't got that feeling."

On another occasion he spoke to me in the following manner, "Men may be good, or bad, I don't know, but in any case they're certainly useless, superfluous—"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that the whole of mankind could very well be wiped out. It's only an ugly excrescence on the face of the earth, a wart. The world would be far more beautiful without mankind, their cities, streets, ports, all their little arrangements. Think how beautiful it would be if there were nothing but sky, sea, trees, earth, animals."

I could not help laughing. "What queer ideas you have!" I exclaimed.

"Mankind," he continued, "has neither a beginning nor an end—therefore it's something decidedly negative"

me and put his head in my lap, crushing his face against my belly and remaining motionless like this for some time. Meanwhile I had to stroke his head again and again with a light, incessant caress of the hand. This was not the first time he had obliged me to perform a kind of mimicry of love; but he seemed more desperate that day than usual. He pressed his head violently into my lap as if he wanted to enter into me and be swallowed up, and groaned occasionally. At such times he no longer seemed like a lover, but rather a baby seeking the warmth and darkness of his mother's lap. And the thought occurred to me that many men would have preferred never to have been born; and that this movement of his unconsciously expressed that dim longing to be engulfed once more in the shadowy vitals from which he had been painfully expelled into the light.

That night he remained kneeling so long that I became drowsy and fell asleep, with my head flung back against the chair, my hand resting on his head. I do not know how long I slept. At a certain moment I woke up and caught a glimpse of Astarita, who was no longer kneeling at my feet but was seated in front of me, already dressed, gazing at me with his mournful, bilious eyes. But perhaps it was only a dream, or a hallucination. The fact is that I suddenly awoke in earnest and found that Astarita had gone, leaving the usual sum of money in my lap where he had lain his head.

About a fortnight passed, and these were among the happiest days in my life. I saw Mino almost every day and although there was no change in our relationship yet I contented myself with the kind of habit we had established, which seemed at last a common ground between us. It was silently taken for granted between us that he did not love me, that he never would love me, and that in any case he preferred chastity to love. It was equally taken for granted that I loved him, that I always would love him despite his indifference to me, and that in any case I preferred a love like that, incomplete and wavering though it might be, to any other love.

I am not made like Astarita; and having once myself to the fact that I was not loved, I found pleasure all the same in loving. At the bottom of my heart perhaps I nursed a hope that my submission and affection might one day make me loved. But I did nothing to encourage this hope. It was, more than anything else, the rather bitter and his uncertain, grudging caresses.

But I certainly did all I could to enter into his life, and since I could not do so by the front door, I exercised my ingenuity in trying to enter by the back door. Despite his explicit and I believe his implicit hatred of mankind, some curious contradiction of an irresistible impulse to preach and act in spite of what he thought was for the good of mankind, though this impulse was almost always checked by his keen regrets and sarcastic disgust, it was sincere.

At that time he appeared to become passionately heated over what he ironically referred to as my mission. As I have said, I tried to bind him to me and before I favored this inclination of his. But the experiment ended almost immediately in a way I think I never while recalling. He came to see me for several days running and brought some books of his with him. He had explained briefly what the subject was, and I tried to read a passage here and there. He read with a great variety of expression in his voice according to the subject matter, and with a passion that made his face and gave his features an unusual animation. I was unable to understand what he read however I tried; and I soon gave up listening to him and occupied myself with watching the different expressions that flitted across his face while he was reading, and I was never tired of.

During these readings he really abandoned himself completely, without any fear or irony, like a man in his own element who is no longer afraid of his sincerity. This fact struck me, because I had always thought that love, not literature,

into a kind of mass, a mass which fills my head—" he tapped his forehead with his finger—"my whole head—and disgusts me as if it were excreta."

I looked at him in puzzled suspense. A quiver of exasperation seemed to run through him at this.

"Try to understand," he cried, "today everything seems incomprehensible. Not only ideas, but even anything written or said or thought—it all seems absurd. For instance, do you know the Lord's Prayer?"

"Yes."

"Say it, then."

"Our Father, which art in Heaven," I began.

"That'll do," he interrupted. "Now just think how many ways this prayer has been said during the centuries, with how many different emotions! Well, I don't understand it at all, in any way. You might say it backwards, it'd be all the same to me."

He was silent for a moment. "It isn't only words that have this effect on me," he continued, "but things, too—people. There are you sitting on the arm of this chair beside me, and perhaps you think I can see you? But I don't see you because I can't understand you—I might even touch you and not understand you all the same. I will touch you, in fact—" as he spoke he pulled at my dressing gown and uncovered my breast, as if he were seized by a sudden frenzy. "I touch your breast—feel its shape, warmth, form, see its color, its outline. But I don't understand what it is. I say to myself: here's a round, warm, soft, white, swelling object, with a little, round, dark knob in the middle, which gives milk and gives pleasure if it is caressed. But I don't understand a thing. I tell myself it's beautiful, that it ought to fill me with desire, but I still don't understand a thing. Do you see what I mean, now?" he repeated furiously, clutching my breast so hard that I could not repress a little cry of pain. He let me go at once. "Probably," he observed reflectively after a moment, "it's just this kind of incomprehension that makes so many people cruel.

"If you like," I replied docilely, without the slightest hesitation.

Mino came up, making his way with some difficulty through the crowd and stood just beside Sonzogno, clinging onto the same seat as he did and actually brushing Sonzogno's thick, short fingers with his own long, slim ones. The streetcar gave a jerk, they were thrown against one another and Mino politely begged Sonzogno's pardon for having knocked into him. I began to feel disturbed at seeing them together, so close and yet so unknown to one another, and I suddenly turned to Mino, deliberately, in such a way that Sonzogno would not think I was addressing him. "Look, I've just remembered I've got an appointment with someone for this evening—it'd be better to say goodbye now."

"If you like I'll see you home."

"No—I'm being met at the streetcar stop."

This was nothing new. I still took men home and Mino knew it. "As you like," he said unconcernedly. "I'll see you tomorrow, then." I nodded in agreement and he went off through the crowd.

As I watched him making his way among the people, I was overcome for a moment by an attack of violent despair. I thought I was seeing him for the last time, but not even I knew why I had this impression. "Good-bye," I murmured to myself, as I followed him with my eyes. "Farewell, love." I wanted to cry out to him to stop, to turn back, but my voice stuck in my throat. The streetcar stopped and I thought I could see him getting down. The streetcar started off again.

During the whole journey Sonzogno and I kept silent. I felt calmer now and told myself the priest could not possibly have spoken. On the other hand, I did not really regret this meeting, after I had thought the matter over for some time. In this way, I would get rid of my doubts once and for all concerning the results of my confession.

I stood up at the streetcar stop, left the streetcar and walked on a little without looking back. Sonzogno was

beside me and I could see him if I turned my head slightly. "What do you want with me?" I asked him at last. "Why have you come back?"

"You told me to come again yourself!" he said with a touch of astonishment.

This was true, but in my terror I had forgotten it. He came up close to me and took my arm, gripping it tight and almost holding me up. I began to tremble all over despite myself.

"Who was that?" he asked.

"A friend of mine."

"Have you seen anything more of Gino?"

"Never."

He looked around him rapidly. "I don't know why, but I've had the impression lately that I'm being followed. There are only two people who could have given me away, you and Gino."

"Why Gino?" I asked in a whisper. But my heart had begun to beat violently.

"He knew I was going to take that thing to the jeweler's, I'd even told him the name. He doesn't exactly know I killed him, but he could easily have guessed it."

"Gino hasn't anything to gain by giving you away; he'd be giving himself away, too."

"That's what I think," he muttered.

"As for me," I went on in my most soothing voice, "you may be sure I've said nothing. I'm not a fool—I'd be arrested, too"

"I hope so, for your own sake," he replied threateningly. "I saw Gino for a moment," he then added. "He told me by way of a joke that he knew a whole heap of things. I don't feel easy in my mind. He's a bad lot."

"You treated him very rough that evening, and of course he hates you now," I said. I realized while I was speaking that I almost hoped Gino had really given him away.

"It was a beauty," he said with grim vanity. "My hand hurt for two days afterwards."

"Gino won't denounce you," I concluded.

for the precipice that causes its head to spin and its eyes to become misted, until finally it is dragged towards the giddy depths.

I climbed up the stairs two at a time, arriving out of breath, and gave Mino's name to the elderly parlormaid who came to open the door.

She looked at me as if scared out of her wits; then, without a single word, she hurried away, leaving me on the threshold.

I thought she had gone to tell Mino, so I went into the hall and closed the door.

Then I heard a kind of whispering behind the curtain that separated the hall from the passage. The curtain was raised and the widow Medolaghi appeared. I had forgotten her entirely since the first and only time I had ever seen her. Her heavy black figure; her white, deathly face, with the black mask of her eyes, filled me with a sense of terror. As she rose up before me, it was as if I were in the presence of some frightening apparition. She halted at some distance from me and addressed me.

"Did you want Signor Díodati?"

"Yes."

"He's been arrested."

I did not understand at first. For some unknown reason, I imagined his arrest was connected in some way with Sonzogno's crime. "Arrested!" I stammered. "But he's got nothing to do with it."

"I know nothing about it," she said. "I only know they came here, searched the house and arrested him." I understood from her expression of disgust that she would not tell me anything.

"But why?" I could not help asking her.

"Signorina, I've already told you I don't know anything."

"Where did they take him?"

"I don't know anything."

"But tell me at least whether he left any message."

This time she did not even reply, but turning away in stiff and offended majesty called out, "Diomira!"

The old parlormaid with the scared look reappeared. Her mistress pointed to the door, and said, as she raised the curtain and turned to go, "Show the young lady out." The curtain fell back into its proper place.

Only after I had gone downstairs and was out in the street, did I realize that Mino's arrest and Sonzogno's crime were two separate facts, independent of one another. The only real link between them was my own fear. This unexpected flood of misfortunes was proof to me of the lavishness of destiny which poured out all magic gifts for me at one and the same time; just as good season makes all kinds of different fruits ripen together. It is a fact that trouble never comes singly, as the proverb says. I felt this, rather than thought it, as I walked from one street to the next, with head and shoulders bowed under a shower of imaginary hailstones.

Naturally, the first person I thought of turning to was Astarita. I knew the phone number of his office by heart, so I went into the first café I came across and rang him. His office was not busy but no one replied. I rang several times and at last became convinced that Astarita was out. He must have gone out to supper and would be back later. I knew all this, but I had hoped that this time I would find him in, as an exception to the rule. I looked at my watch. It was eight o'clock in the evening, and Astarita would not be back in his office before nine. I stood on a street corner, the curved surface of a fountain lay before me, with its unending flow of foot-traffic, single and in groups, and they rushed toward the fountain, dark and hurrying, like dead leaves driven by a senseless wind. The rows of houses beyond the bridge suggested an impression of peace, with all their windows lit up and people moving up and down among the trees and other furniture. It occurred to me that I was not very far away from the central police station, where I imagined Mino must have been taken, and although I knew it was a desperate undertaking, I decided to go straight there to ask for news of him. I knew in advance

could not be explained only by my love for Mino. My scorn for Astarita formed part of it, too—for his Ministry, for political matters and for Mino himself, inasmuch as he troubled himself with politics. I understood nothing at all about politics, but perhaps it was my very ignorance that made politics seem a ridiculous, unimportant matter compared with my love for Mino. I remembered the way Astarita's speech was impeded by his stammer every time he saw me, or even when he only heard my voice, and I thought complacently that he certainly did not stammer when he faced one of his chiefs, even if it was Mussolini himself. With these thoughts in my mind, I hurried along the huge corridors of the Ministry and noticed I was looking scornfully at all the clerks I happened to meet. I longed to snatch the red and green folders they were carrying and throw them away, to scatter to the winds all their papers full of prohibitions and iniquity.

"I have to speak to Dr. Astarita at once—I have an appointment and can't wait," I said imperiously to the usher who came towards me in the anteroom. He looked at me in amazement but did not dare to protest and went to announce me.

As soon as Astarita saw me, he hurried forward, kissed my hand and led me towards a divan at the end of the room. This was the way he had greeted me the first time, too, and I suppose it was the way he behaved to all the women who came to his office. I restrained the surge of anger that I felt swelling within me. "Look," I said, "if you've had Mino arrested—have him set free at once. Otherwise you'll never see me again."

An expression of profound astonishment mixed with some unpleasant afterthought was painted on his face, and I realized he knew nothing about the whole matter. "Just a moment—what on earth! . . . What Mino?" he stuttered.

"I thought you knew about it," I said. And then I told him, as shortly as possible, the whole story of my love for Mino and how he had been arrested that after-

n. I saw him change color when I said I preferred to tell him the truth, not only because I was afraid of harming Mino if I lied, but also because I wanted to proclaim my love to the whole world. After having discovered that Astarita had had nothing to do with Mino's arrest, the rage which had kept me so far had died down, and once more I felt weak and disarmed. For this reason I began my tale in a low, excited voice and ended almost in tears. In the end my eyes were overflowing. "I don't know what they will do with him," I said in anguish. "He says they beat them all the time." Astarita interrupted me immediately. "Don't worry, he was a workingman, but since he's a student—" "But I don't want him to be shut up!" I cried desperately.

Then we were silent. I tried to master my emotions, but Astarita looked at me. For the first time he seemed reluctant to do me the favor I was asking him. His unwillingness to satisfy me must have been due to his disappointment at finding that I was not a free man. "If you get him out," I said, as I placed my hand over his, "I promise I'll do anything you want." He looked at me irresolutely, and although my hand was not in it I bent forward and offered him my lips. "Well—will you do me this favor?" I asked.

He gazed at me, torn between the temptation to kiss me and the consciousness of the humiliation of a kiss offered by a tear-stained face as a mere bribe. Then he pushed me away, leaped to his feet, told me to wait and disappeared.

I was certain now that Astarita would have Mino freed. I was so inexperienced in these matters that I imagined Astarita telephoning in angry tones to a vile warder and telling him to free Giacomo Diodoro immediately. I counted the minutes impatiently, and when Astarita reappeared I rose to my feet, thinking I would thank him and then hurry away to meet Mino.

But there was a singularly unpleasant expression on Astarita's face, a mixture of disappointment and

desire not to feel entirely excluded from the forbidden paradise of love affairs.

There were two doors that were extremely familiar to me at the end of the corridor. Zelinda opened the left-hand one and preceded me into the room. She switched the three-branched lamp with its glass tulip bulbs and went to close the shutters. It was a large, clean room. But the cleanliness seemed to throw into pitiless relief the poor condition of the furnishings—the threadbare carpets by the bed, the darns in the cotton coverlet, the coruscating mirrors, the chips on the jug and basin. She came towards me. "Don't you feel well?" she asked me as she looked at me.

"I feel quite well."

"Why don't you sleep at your own place?"

"I didn't want to."

"Let's see if I can guess what's the matter," she said with a fond, knowing air. "You've had a disappointment—you were expecting someone and he didn't turn up."

"Perhaps—"

"And let's see if I'm right this time, too—it was that dark, young officer you came with last time."

This was not the first time that Zelinda had asked me questions of this kind. "You're quite right—aren't you?" I replied, almost choking with anguish.

"Oh nothing—but, you see, I understand you at once. I guessed what was the matter immediately. But you mustn't be upset—if he didn't come, he must have had some reason for it. Soldiers aren't their own masters, you know."

I did not reply. She looked at me for a moment. Then she addressed me again in her fond, hesitant, coaxing voice. "Do you want to keep me company at supper? There's something nice."

"No thanks," I replied hastily. "I've already eaten."

She looked at me once again and gave me a little tap on the cheek in place of a caress. "Now I'll give you something you won't refuse," she then said, with a

promising, mysterious expression of an old aunt talking to some young nephew. She pulled a bunch of keys out of her pocket, went over to the chest of drawers and opened one of the drawers with her back to me.

I had undone my coat and now, leaning against the table with one hand on my hip, I watched Zelinda rummaging about in the bottom of the drawer. I remembered that Gisella often came to that room with her men friends, and I remembered Zelinda did not like Gisella. She liked me for myself and not because she liked everyone. I felt consoled. After all, I thought, there was something else in the world besides police, ministries, prisons and other such cruel, heartless things. Meanwhile Zelinda had finished rummaging in her drawer. She shut it carefully and came over to me, repeating, "Here—you certainly won't refuse this," and put something down on the mat on the table. I looked and saw five cigarettes, good ones, gold-tipped, a handful of sweets wrapped in colored papers and four little colored fruits made of almond paste. "How's that?" she asked, giving me another little pat on the cheek.

"That's fine, thanks," I stammered in embarrassment.

"Don't mention it, don't mention it—if you need anything, just call me, don't be afraid."

When I was alone once more I felt chilled to the marrow and in a state of great indecision. I was not sleepy and I did not want to go to bed; but in that cold room, where the chill of winter seemed to have been preserved for years as it is in churches and cellars, there was nothing else to do. I had never had to face this problem on the other occasions when I had come there—both the man accompanying me and I myself longed only to get beneath the sheets and warm one another; and although I had no fondness for those pick-up lovers, nevertheless the act of love itself absorbed me and overwhelmed me in its spell. It now seemed incredible to me that I had made love and had been made love to among such squalid furniture, in such a chill atmosphere. The ardor of the senses must certainly have created an illu-

sion for me and my companions each time, making those ridiculously alien objects both pleasant and familiar. It occurred to me that my life, if I were never to see Mino again, would be just like that room. If I looked back at my life objectively, without any illusions, I saw that it contained nothing beautiful or intimate. Indeed, it was entirely made up of ugly, worn, chilly things, like Zelinda's room. I shuddered and began to undress slowly.

The sheets were icy and seemed clammy with dampness; I had the impression when I stretched myself in the bed that I was imprinting the shape of my body on wet clay. For a long time I remained lost in thought while the sheets gradually grew warmer. I went off on a sidetrack thinking about Sonzogno and analyzing the motives and the consequences of all that obscure business. Sonzogno certainly believed by now that I had betrayed him and appearances were all against me. But only the appearances? I remembered his phrase, "I have a feeling I'm being followed," and I asked myself whether the priest had talked, after all. It did not seem likely but so far nothing went to prove that he had not.

With my mind still on Sonzogno, I began to imagine to myself what must have happened at home after I had left. I imagined Sonzogno waiting, getting impatient, dressing, the entrance of the two policemen, Sonzogno pulling out his gun, shooting without warning and running away. These imaginary pictures of what had occurred caused me an obscure, insatiable sense of pleasure, as they had done when I had reconstructed Sonzogno's crime. Time and again I went over the scene of the shooting, dwelt lovingly on all the details; undoubtedly, in the struggle between Sonzogno and the police, I was heart and soul on Sonzogno's side. I trembled with joy at seeing the wounded policeman fall to the ground; I heaved a sigh of relief when Sonzogno escaped; I followed him anxiously down the stairs. My peace of mind was restored only when I saw him disappear in the darkness of the distant main road. At last

I grew tired of this kind of mental cinema, and put out the light.

I had already noticed on other occasions that the bed stood against a door that communicated with the next room. As soon as I had put out the light, I saw that the two halves of the door did not meet properly and a ray of light shone through the gap. I pulled myself up onto the pillows on my elbows, slipped my head between the iron decorations at the end of the bed and peeped through the slit. I did not do this out of curiosity, since I already knew what I would see and hear, but I was afraid of my thoughts and my loneliness, and my fear led me to seek for companionship in the next room, even if I could do so only by eavesdropping. But for some time I could see no one at all—there was a round table in front of the slit in the door and the light from the chandelier poured down onto the table, beyond which I caught a glimpse of a wardrobe mirror gleaming in deep shadow. But I could hear voices—the usual talk that was so familiar to me, about one's home town, one's age and name. The woman's voice was unemotional and reserved, the man's hurried and excited. They were talking in some corner of the room, perhaps they were already in bed. I began to have an acute pain in my neck through gazing so long without seeing anything and I was about to turn away when the woman appeared beyond the table, in front of the dim mirror. Her back was towards me, she stood up straight, naked, but visible only from the waist upwards, because the table hindered my view. She must have been very young; her back, under her mane of curly hair, was thin, hard, ungraceful, and of an anemic whiteness. She looked as if she were not even twenty years old, but her bosom was flaccid and probably she had already had a child. She must be one of those half-starving young girls, I thought, who hang around among the clumps of trees near the station, hatless and often coatless, badly painted and ragged, their feet thrust into enormous wedge-shoes. When she laughed she must show her gums, I thought.

these things occurred to me quite spontaneously, without reflection, because the sight of that miserable, hunched back comforted me and I felt I loved her and understood only too well the feelings she was experiencing at that moment while looking at herself in the mirror. But the man's voice called out roughly, "What earth are you up to?" and she left the mirror. For a moment I saw her sideways, with her bent shoulders and scraggy chest, just as I had imagined her. Then she vanished and a second later the light was extinguished. The vague affection I had felt for the girl while I could see her was extinguished, too, and I found myself all alone once more in the great, cold bed, in that darkness filled with worn, chilly objects. I thought of the two of them there on the other side of the wall, who would fall asleep together after a short while. She would rest her head on her companion's back with her chin resting on his shoulder, her legs entwined in his, her arm round his waist, her hand on his groin and her fingers falling languidly across his belly—like roots seeking for nourishment in the deepest earth. And suddenly I felt I was like an uprooted plant myself, thrown out upon a smooth pavingstone where I would wither and die. I missed Mino, and if I stretched out my hand, I became conscious of an enormous, empty, frozen space that surrounded me on all sides, while I lay there huddled up in the middle without any protection or companionship. My longing to embrace him was painfully acute, but he was not there, and I felt widowed and began to weep, with my arm underneath the sheets, pretending to myself that I was holding him. At last I fell asleep, I know not how.

I have always slept well and deeply. Sleep for me is like an appetite, easily satisfied without any particular effort or interruption. So when I awoke next morning, I was almost surprised to find myself in Zelinda's room, stretched out in that bed, in a ray of sunshine that slipped through the shutters and fell onto the pillow and the wall. I had hardly realized where I was when I

heard the phone ring in the corridor. Zelinda answered. I heard her say my name and then she knocked at the door. I leaped out of bed and ran to the door as I was, in my nightgown with bare feet.

The passage was empty, the receiver lay on a ledge, Zelinda had gone back into the kitchen. I heard mother's voice at the other end of the line.

"Is that you, Adriana?"

"Yes."

"What made you go away? If you knew what's been happening here! You might have warned me. I've had such a scare!"

"Yes, I know all about it," I said hurriedly. "It's no good talking about it."

"I was so worried about you," she went on, "and then there's Signor Diodati."

"Signor Diodati?"

"Yes, he came along very early this morning. He wants to see you very urgently. He says he'll wait here."

"Tell him I'll be along at once. Tell him I'll be there in a minute or two."

I hung up the receiver, ran into my room and dressed as quickly as I could. I had not even hoped for Mino to be set free so quickly, and I felt less happy than I would have done if I had waited for his liberation for a few days or a week. I mistrusted such a speedy release, and I could not help feeling vaguely apprehensive. Every fact has a meaning, and I was unable to grasp the meaning of that rapid return to freedom. But I calmed down when I thought that possibly Astarita had managed to have him set free immediately as he had promised. In my case, I was impatient to see him again, and my impatience was a pleasant sensation, although it was also rather painful.

I finished dressing, put the cigarettes, sweets and almond paste into my bag so as not to hurt Zelinda's feelings, since I had not touched them the evening before, and went into the kitchen to say goodbye to her.

"Feeling more cheerful?" she said. "Got over your bad mood?"

"I was feeling tired. Bye-bye for the present."

"Now, now! Do you think I didn't hear you on the telephone? Signor Diodati, eh? Here, wait a minute—have a cup of coffee." She was still talking when I was already out of the flat.

Perched on the edge of the seat in the taxi, with my hands gripping my bag, I was quite ready to leap out as soon as it stopped; I was afraid I would find a crowd in front of the house on account of Sonzogno's shooting. I wondered whether I was wise in going home—Sonzogno might turn up to revenge himself upon me. But I realized I did not care. If Sonzogno wanted to take his revenge on me, he could. I longed to see Mino and was determined I would never hide myself for something I had not done.

I met no one at the street door nor on the stairs. I rushed into the living room and saw mother sitting at the sewing machine by the window. The sun poured in through the dirty windowpanes, the cat was sitting on the table licking its paws. Mother stopped sewing immediately. "So there you are!" she exclaimed. "You might at least have told me you'd gone out to get the police!"

"What police? What on earth do you mean?"

"I'd have gone with you—if you only knew how frightened I was."

"I didn't go out to get the police," I protested angrily. "I went out, that's all. The police were looking for someone else. This man must have had something on his conscience."

"So you won't even tell me," she said, looking at me reproachfully.

"Tell you what?"

"I won't go and gossip. But you'll never get me to believe you went out for nothing. The police came a few minutes after you'd left."

"But it isn't true, I—"

"You were quite right, anyway. There are some dreadful people about. Do you know what one of the policemen said? 'I've seen that face before,' he said."

I saw that there was no way of convincing her; she thought I had gone out on purpose to denounce Sonzogno and there was nothing more to be said about it. "All right, all right," I interrupted her brusquely. "What about the wounded man? How did they take him away?"

"What wounded man?"

"I was told a man was dying—"

"No, no, they told you wrong. One of the policemen got his arm grazed by a bullet. I bandaged it for him myself. But he went away quite all right. Still, if you'd heard the shots! They were shooting on the stairs. The whole house was in an uproar. Then they questioned me, but I said I knew nothing about it."

"Where is Signor Diodati?"

"In your room."

I had lingered with mother for a little while because I now felt almost reluctant to go to Mino, as though I anticipated some bad news. I left the living room and went towards my own room. It was plunged in darkness, but even before I put my hand out to the switch, I heard Mino's voice. "Please don't put the light on," he said. The peculiar tone of his voice struck me; it did not sound at all cheerful. I shut the door, groped my way to the bed, sat down on the edge of it. I could feel he was lying on his side near me. "Don't you feel well?" I asked him.

"Perfectly well."

"Aren't you tired?"

"No, I'm not tired."

I had expected quite a different kind of meeting. But it is a fact that joy and light are inseparable. In the dark like that my eyes seemed unable to sparkle, my voice was incapable of breaking into exclamations of joy, my hands could not recognize his beloved features. I waited for some time. "What do you want to do?" I then asked.

as I bent towards him. "Do you want to go to sleep?"

"No."

"Do you want me to go away?"

"No."

"Do you want me to stay here beside you?"

"Yes."

"Do you want me to lie on the bed?"

"Yes."

"Do you want to make love?" I asked casually.

"Yes."

This reply was a surprise to me, because, as I have already said, he never really felt inclined to love me. Suddenly I felt myself growing excited. "Do you like to make love to me?" I asked him affectionately.

"Yes."

"Will you always like it from now on?"

"Yes."

"Shall we always be together?"

"Yes."

"Don't you want me to put the light on?"

"No."

"It doesn't matter; I'll get undressed in the dark."

I began to undress with the intoxicating sensation of having won a complete victory. I imagined that the light he had spent in prison had unexpectedly shown him that he loved me and needed me. I was wrong, as I shall relate; and although I was right in thinking that there was a connection between his arrest and his unexpected submissiveness, I did not understand that the change in his attitude had nothing flattering or even encouraging in it for me. But on the other hand, I could not very well have been more clear-sighted at that moment. My body urged me impetuously towards him, like a horse that has been curbed too long, and

I was impatient to give

him his attitude and the

him earlier.

But when I drew

bed to stretch myself beside him, I suddenly felt him grip my knees with his arms and then bite me savagely on the left hip. I felt an acute spasm of pain while at the same time I realized absolutely that the bite expressed some indefinable despair he was experiencing. It was as though we were two cursed souls driven by hatred, rage and sadness to bury our teeth in one another's flesh in the depths of some new hell, rather than two lovers about to make love. It seemed an endless bite, it was as though he wanted to tear out a piece of my flesh with his teeth. At last, although I half-wanted him to bite me and his biting gave me a feeling of pleasure, while at the same time I sensed that there was little love in it, I could not stand the pain any longer and I pushed him away. "No, no," I said in a humble, broken voice, "what are you doing? You're hurting me—"

And so my illusion of victory came to an end. After this, we said not one word more all the time we were making love; but nevertheless I was able from his behavior to guess dimly at the real meaning of his abandonment, which he later explained to me in detail. I understood that until that moment he had wanted not so much to ignore me as to ignore that part of himself which desired me; now, on the contrary, he gave this part of himself free rein, whereas hitherto he had fought against it—that was all. I had nothing to do with it, and he no more loved me now than he had done before. It was all the same to him whether he had me or another girl. I was nothing more than a means he adopted to punish or reward himself. I was not so much conscious of thinking these things while we lay in the dark together, as of feeling them in my flesh and my blood, just as some time before I had sensed the fact that Sonzogno was a monster although I had known nothing of his crime. But I loved him; and my love was stronger than my knowledge.

But, nevertheless, I was amazed at the violence and indefatigable quality of his desire, which had once been

grudging. I had always thought that he restrained himself for reasons of health, since he was delicate. Therefore, when he began all over again after he had already made love to me I could not help whispering to him, "Do as you like, as far as I'm concerned—but find it doesn't hurt you."

I believed he laughed. "Nothing can ever hurt me now," he murmured in my ear.

That "ever" gave me a ghastly sensation and therefore the pleasure I felt in his embraces was almost completely obliterated, and I waited impatiently for the moment when I could talk to him and find out what had actually happened. After we had finished making love, he seemed to drop off but perhaps he did not really sleep. I waited for a reasonable length of time before speaking to him. "And now tell me what happened," I said in a low voice, with an effort which made my heart miss a beat.

"Nothing happened."

"But something must have happened."

He was silent for a moment and then spoke as if to himself. "I suppose you'll have to know, too. Well, this is what happened. At eleven o'clock yesterday evening became a traitor."

An icy chill gripped me at these words, not so much on account of the words themselves as for the tone in which he uttered them. "A traitor?" I stammered. "Why?"

The tone of his reply was cold and grimly humorous. Mino, among the comrades of his political faith, was known for the intransigence and the violence of his reactions—Signor Mino was considered by them to be cut out for their future leader—Signor Mino was so sure that he would do himself credit in any circumstances that he almost hoped he would be arrested and that he test—because, you see, il Signor Mino thought that arrest and imprisonment are an essential part of his kind, just as long cruises, hurri-

think you said all sorts of things—but actually you didn't say a thing."

"No, I'm not mistaken," he said briefly.

I was silent for a moment. "What about your friends?" I then asked him.

"What friends?"

"Tullio and Tommaso."

"I don't know anything about them," he said, deliberately assuming an air of indifference. "They'll be arrested."

"No, they won't!" I exclaimed. I thought Astarita certainly would not take advantage of Mino's momentary weakness. But at the idea of their being arrested, the gravity of the whole matter began to dawn upon me.

"Why not?" he said. "I gave their names. There's no reason why they shouldn't be arrested."

"Oh, Mino," I could not help exclaiming painfully. "Why did you do it?"

"That's what I keep on asking myself."

"But if they aren't arrested," I went on after a moment, clinging to the only hope I had left, "it isn't so desperate. They'll never know that you—"

"But I know it!" he interrupted me. "I'll always know it. I'll always know that I'm not the same person as I was but someone else, someone I have given birth to as surely as a mother gives birth to her child. But unfortunately, it's not a person I like. That's the trouble. Some men kill their wives because they can't bear to live with them. Now just imagine what it must be like to be two people in one body, when one of them hates the other like death. Anyway, as far as my friends are concerned—they're sure to be arrested."

I could not restrain myself any longer. "Even if you'd never spoken," I said, "you'd have been released all the same. And your friends aren't in any danger." Then I hurriedly told him the story of my relationship with Astarita, by intervention on his behalf, and Astarita's promise. He listened to me in silence. "Better and better!" he said at last. "So I don't owe my release to

of angry disdain. I put both hands to my face and sobbed out my wretchedness noisily. I wanted to cry forever, to go on crying endlessly, because I was afraid of the moment when I would stop weeping and would be left empty, dazed, and still confronted by the unchanged situation which had provoked my outburst. The moment came, however, and I dried my wet face with the sheet and stared into the darkness with wide-open eyes. Then I heard him address me in a gentle, affectionate voice. "Let's see what you think I ought to do," he asked.

I turned round violently, clung to him as hard as I could and spoke with my mouth on his. "Don't think any more about it. Don't worry about it any more. What's done is done. That's what you ought to do."

"And then?"

"And then begin studying again. Take your degree. And after that go back to your own home town. I don't mind if I don't see you again, as long as I know you're happy. Begin to work. When the time comes, marry a girl from that part of the world, a girl who loves you, a girl of your own class. What have you got to do with politics? You weren't made for politics, you were wrong ever to take it up. It was a mistake, but everyone makes mistakes. One day you'll think it extraordinary that you ever bothered your head about it all. I really do love you, Mino. Another woman in my place wouldn't want to leave you, but if it's necessary, go away tomorrow. If you think it's best, we'll never meet again. As long as you're happy—"

"But I'll never be happy again," he said in a clear, deep voice. "I'm an informer."

"It's not true!" I answered in exasperation. "You're not an informer at all. And even if you were, you could be happy all the same! There are heaps of people who have even committed crimes and yet they're perfectly happy. Take me, for example. When people talk of a streetwalker the Lord only knows what they imagine. But I'm a woman like any other, and I'm often happy."

I was so happy these last few days," I added bitterly.

"You were happy?"

"Yes, very. But I knew it couldn't last. And, in fact—" at these words I felt like crying again, but I controlled myself "you imagined yourself as something quite different from what you are. And then we know what happened. Now you must accept yourself as you really are, and everything will fall into place. What's making you so unhappy over what happened is the fact that you feel ashamed, and are afraid of what other people, your friends, will think. Give up seeing them then, see other people; the world's a big place! If they aren't fond enough of you to understand it was only a moment's weakness, stay with me. I love you and understand you and don't sit in judgment on you—really!" I exclaimed forcefully at this stage. "Even if you had done something a thousand times worse, you'd still be my Mino."

He kept silent. "I'm only a poor, ignorant girl. I know," I went on, "but I understand some things better than your friends and better even than you. I've had just the same feeling as you have now. The first time we met and you didn't touch me, I got it into my head that it was because you despised me, and I felt so unhappy, I suddenly lost all desire to go on living. I wanted to be someone else and at the same time I realized that was impossible and that I'd have to go on being what I was. I felt a sticky, burning kind of shame, despair, heartsickness. I felt shriveled, frozen, bound hand and foot. I even wanted to die, or so I thought at times. Then one day I went out with mother and we happened to go into a church and there, as I prayed, I felt I understood that I had nothing to be ashamed of in my heart. If I was made as I was, it meant it was the will of God; I ought not to rebel against my fate but accept it submissively and trustfully, and if you despised me it was your fault and not mine. In fact, I thought a great many things and at last my humiliation passed over and I felt gay and lighthearted again."

He began to laugh, a laugh that froze me. "That is," he answered, "I ought to accept what I've done and not struggle against it. I ought to accept what I've done and what I've become and not judge myself. Well, maybe such things can happen in church, but out of church—"

"Go to church, then," I suggested, clinging to a new hope.

"No, I won't. I don't believe in it and I'm only bored in church. Besides—what a way of talking!" He began to laugh again but suddenly stopped short and, seizing me by the shoulders, started to shake me violently. "Don't you understand what I've done?" he shouted. "Don't you understand? Don't you understand?" He shook me so hard that he made me lose my breath before hurling me back with one final outburst, and then I heard him leap out of bed and begin to dress in the dark. "Don't put the light on," he said threateningly. "I've got to get used to being looked at. But it's too soon yet. Look out for yourself if you switch the light on!" I did not even dare to breathe. "Are you going?" I asked him at last.

"Yes, but I'll come back," he said and I believe he laughed again. "Don't be afraid. I'll come back. What's more, here's a piece of good news for you—I'll come and live here with you."

"Here with me?"

"Yes, but I shan't be a nuisance. You'll be able to carry on with your usual way of life. As a matter of fact," he went on, "we could both of us live on what my family sends me. I was paying full board, but it would be enough for the two of us, living at home."

I found the idea that he might come and live with me strange rather than delightful. But I did not dare to make any comment. He finished dressing in silence in the pitch dark. "I'll be back tonight," he then said. I heard him open the door, go out, shut the door. I lay there in the dark, my eyes straining wide open.

THAT VERY AFTERNOON I followed Astarita's advice and went to the local police station to make a statement about Sonzogno's case. I went most reluctantly, because after what had happened to Mino anything that was remotely connected with the police inspired me with mortal dread. But by now I was almost resigned: I realized that life had lost almost all its savor for me for some time to come.

"We expected you this morning," said the commissioner of police as soon as I had told him the reason for my visit. He was a fine fellow—I had known him for some time—and although he was the father of a family and over fifty years old, I had sensed much earlier that his feelings for me were more than friendly. What stands out in my memory of him is his nose, large and spongy, giving him a melancholy expression. His hair was always standing on end and his eyes were always half shut, as if he had only just got out of bed. His sharp blue eyes seemed to be peeping out from behind a mask; his thick, pink, wrinkled face was like the skin of those huge oranges, the last of the season, which contain nothing but a shriveled core.

I said I had been unable to come sooner. The blue eyes behind the orange-peel skin of his face looked at me for a moment and then he addressed me confidentially. "Well, what's his name?"

"How should I know?"

"Come, come, of course you know!"

"I give you my word of honor," I said with my hand on my heart. "He stopped me in the Corso—I remember thinking there was something queer about him, but I didn't take any notice."

"But how was it you left him alone in your room?"

"I had an urgent appointment, so I left him."

"But he thought you'd gone out to call the police."

Did you know that? And he shouted out that you'd given him away."

"Yes, I know."

"And that he'd pay you back."

"What then?"

"But don't you realize he's a dangerous man," he added, looking at me intently; "and might even fire at you tomorrow, for having given him away, just as he fired at the police?"

"Of course, I realize it."

"Then why won't you tell us who he is? We'll have him arrested and you needn't worry any more."

"But I've told you I don't know his name! Am I supposed to know the names of all the men I take home?"

"But we know who he is!" he suddenly declared, in a higher, more theatrical tone of voice as he leaned forward.

I knew he was only pretending. "If you know," I answered coolly, "why bother me about it? Arrest him and don't let's hear any more about the whole thing."

He looked at me in silence for a moment. I noticed that his restless, worried eyes were examining my figure rather than my face, and I understood that, despite himself, his professional sense of duty had been overcome by his desire for me. "We also know that if he fired and then ran off, he must have had good reason for doing it," he went on.

"Oh, I'm quite sure of that!"

"But you know what his reasons are."

"I don't know anything. If I don't know his name, how could I know the rest?"

"We know the whole business," he said. By now he was speaking quite mechanically, as if he were thinking about something else, and I felt sure that in another moment he would get up and come over to me. "We know all about it and we'll get him. It's just a question of days—perhaps hours."

"So much the better for you."

He stood up as I had foreseen he would, walked

spoil love, and is deliberately planned through an excess of joy, rather than through an inability to bear suffering. At those moments when I felt I loved Mino so intensely that I would never be able to love him so much in the future, the idea of a suicide pact occurred to me quite naturally, with the same impulsiveness with which I kissed and caressed him. But I had never mentioned it to him, because I knew that if two people commit suicide together they have to be in love to the same degree. And Mino did not love me; or if he loved me, not so much that he wanted to die with me.

I was pondering on all these things as I walked home. But all of a sudden an attack of giddiness accompanied by a wave of sickness and a ghastly feeling of weakness in all my limbs overcame me, and I just had time to go into a milk-bar nearby. I was not far from home, but I knew I did not have the strength to cover that short distance without falling down.

I sat down at one of the little tables behind the glass-fronted door and shut my eyes, feeling shattered. I still felt sick and giddy and this sensation was increased by the puffs of steam from the coffee machine, which were extremely upsetting although strangely remote. I could feel the warmth of the closed, heated room on my hands and face, but despite this I felt very cold. "A cup of coffee, Miss Adriana?" called the man behind the counter, who knew me well, and without opening my eyes I nodded assent.

At last I recovered and sipped the coffee which the man had placed on the table in front of me. As a matter of fact, it was not the first time I had felt the same kind of sickness but it had always been very slight, scarcely noticeable. I had not paid any attention to it, because the extraordinary and distressing events in which I had been involved had prevented me. But now, thinking it over and associating my feeling of sickness with a significant interruption in my physical life, which had occurred in the previous month, I became convinced that the vague suspicion I had had recently, but had

always pushed into the darkest background of my consciousness, must be founded on fact. There can be no doubt about it, I suddenly found myself thinking. I must be expecting a child.

I paid for the coffee and left the place. What I felt was extremely complicated and even now, after such a lapse of time, I do not find it at all easy to express it. I have already remarked that misfortunes never come singly; and this new fact, which I would have greeted joyously at any other time and on another occasion, seemed to me to be a real piece of bad luck in the present circumstances. But on the other hand, my temperament is such that an inexplicable and irresistible instinct always leads me to discover an attractive side even in the most unpleasant circumstances. This time it was not at all difficult to find the attractive side; it was the same feeling which fills the hearts of all women with hope and satisfaction when they learn that they are pregnant. Certainly my child would be born in the least favorable conditions imaginable; but he would still be my child. I would be the one who had given him birth, and I would educate him and delight in him. A child is always a child, I thought, and no woman, however poor she is, however desperate her circumstances and uncertain her future, however abandoned and unprovided for, can help being happy at the idea of giving birth to a child.

These thoughts restored my calm, so that, after a moment's fear and despair, I once more felt as placid and trustful as ever I was. The young doctor, who had examined me some time before when mother had dragged me to the chemist's in order to find out whether Gino and I had been making love, had his consulting room not far from the milk-bar. I made up my mind to go and be examined by him. It was early and there was no one in the waiting room. The doctor, who knew me very well, greeted me cordially.

"Doctor, I'm almost sure I'm pregnant," I announced quietly as soon as he had closed the door.

He began to laugh because he knew what my pr

session was. "Are you sorry?" he asked me.

"Not at all. I'm glad in fact."

"Let's see."

After he had put me several questions about my sickness, he made me lie down on the oilcloth sheet spread on the couch, and examined me. "You've hit the nail right on the head this time," he said cheerfully.

I was glad to have my suspicions confirmed without any shadow of doubt. I was perfectly calm. "I knew I was," I said. "I only came to make sure."

"You can be absolutely sure."

He rubbed his hands together as joyfully as if he were the father himself and swayed from one foot to the other; he was cheerful and pleasantly disposed towards me. Only one thing troubled me and I wanted to make certain. "How far gone am I?" I asked.

"About two months, I should say—more or less. Why? Do you want to know who it was?"

"I know already."

I made for the door. "If you need anything, come and see me," he said as he opened the door for me.

"And when the time comes, we'll see that the child is born under the best conditions possible." He, like the commissioner of police, was very fond of me. But I liked him, too, whereas I had no liking whatsoever for the commissioner. I have already described the doctor once. He was a handsome young man, very dark, strong and vigorous, with a black mustache, bright eyes and white teeth, as cheerful and lively as a gun-dog. I often went to him to have myself examined, at least once a fortnight, and once or twice I had let him make love to me, out of gratitude because he did not make me pay him a fee, on the same couch where he had examined me. But he was very tactful and, except for an occasional playful gesture, he never tried to force his desire on me. He gave me advice, and I think he was a little bit in love with me in his own way.

I had told him I knew who was the father of my child. In point of fact, at that moment I felt I knew it instinctively.

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"Good evening," I said lazily as I came forward.

"Good evening, good evening," said Mino in a grating, hesitant voice. I looked at his face, saw how bright his eyes were and I felt sure he was drunk. One end of the table was spread with a napkin and knives and forks for two, and, knowing that mother always ate on her own in the kitchen, I realized that the second place was for Mino. "Good evening," he repeated, "I've brought my suitcases. They're in the other room. And I've made friends with your mother. We understand one another perfectly, don't we?" he said to her.

I felt faint at heart as I heard his sarcastic and grimly playful voice. I slumped down into a chair and shut my eyes for a moment. I heard mother reply to him. "That's what you say. But if you speak badly of Adriana, we'll never get along together."

"But what have I said?" exclaimed Mino, feigning astonishment. "That Adriana was born for the life she leads. That Adriana thinks life's wonderful. What's wrong about that?"

"It isn't true," retorted mother. "Adriana wasn't born for the life she leads. She deserved something far better with all her beauty. Don't you know she's one of the handsomest girls in the neighborhood, if not in all Rome? I see lots of other girls who aren't nearly as good looking as she is, who strike it lucky. But Adriana, who's as lovely as a queen, never gets anywhere. And I know why."

"Why?"

"Because she's too good, that's why. Because she's beautiful and good. If she were beautiful and bad, you'd see how differently everything would run."

"Come, come," I said, feeling embarrassed by this discussion and more particularly by Mino's tone of voice for he seemed to be making fun of mother. "I'm hungry. Isn't dinner ready yet?"

"It's ready now." Mother put her sewing on the table and went out hurriedly. I followed her into the kitchen.

"Are we setting up a boardinghouse?" she grumbled.

"Maybe," said mother, "but I never liked the police myself. The son of the laundress who lives below us is a policeman, too. Do you know what the young fellow who work next door in the cement works said to him? 'Keep off, we don't want anything more to do with you.' And anyway, the work's badly paid." She made a face and changed his plate, then offered him the dish of meat.

"That's not what I mean," retorted Mino as he helped himself. "What I mean is an important job, something very delicate, very secret. What the devil! I haven't studied for nothing! I've almost taken my degree. I know modern languages. Poor people become mere policemen, not people like me."

"Maybe," repeated mother. "Take this," she added, pushing the largest piece of meat onto my plate.

"Not maybe at all," said Mino. "It really is as I say."

He was silent for a moment. "The government knows that the country's full of people opposed to it, not only among the poor but among the rich, too. They need educated people to spy on the rich, people who speak as they do, dress as they do, have the same manners and inspire confidence. That's what I'll do. I'll be well paid, I'll live in first-class hotels, travel in a sleeper, eat in the best restaurants, get my clothes from a fashionable tailor, visit fashionable seaside resorts, famous holiday places in the mountains. What on earth did you take me for?"

By now mother was gaping at him. She was dazzled by such splendor. "In that case," she said at last, "I've nothing to say."

I had finished my meal. I suddenly found it was quite beyond me to go on watching such a heart-rending comedy. "I'm tired," I said brusquely. "I'm going into the other room." I got up and left the living room.

When I was in my own room I sat on the bed and huddled myself up, then began to cry silently through my fingers which concealed my face. I thought of Mino's distress, the baby that I was going to have, and both these things, the distress and the baby, seemed to be

best time of all, when children are at their most charming and beautiful. And as I thought of all the things he would do and say and the way I would bring him up, I grew cheerful again, as I had hoped I would and forgot Mino and his distress for a moment. I had finished mending my nightgown and as I took up another piece of work I reflected upon the way in which I could relieve the tension of the long hours spent with Mino by making the baby's layette. Only I would have to hide from him what I was doing, or I would have to find an excuse. I thought I would tell him that I was making it for a neighbor of ours who was actually expecting a baby, and I thought it would be a good excuse, since I had already mentioned her to Mino and had referred to her poverty. I was so taken up with these ideas that, without noticing it, almost, I began to hum softly. I have a very good ear, although my voice is not very strong, and my accent is extraordinarily sweet, even in my speaking voice, I began to sing a song that was popular just then "*Villa triste*." When I raised my eyes, as I bit the thread in two with which I was sewing, I saw Mino looking at me. I thought he might blame me for singing at a time that was so grave for him, so I stopped.

"Sing some more," he said, looking at me.

"Do you like me to sing?"

"Yes."

"But I can't sing well."

"It doesn't matter."

I took up my sewing again and began to sing for him. Like most girls, I knew quite a number of songs; in fact, I had quite a good repertoire because my memory is excellent and I could even remember the songs I had learned as a child. I sang a little of everything and as soon as I had finished one song I began another. At first I sang softly and then, as it grew on me, I sang aloud with all the feeling I could muster. One song followed another, and they were all different. As I sang one, I was already thinking of the next. He listened to me with a serious expression on his face, and I was glad

that I was able to distract his attention from the remorse he felt. But at the same time I remembered that once when I was a child I had lost some toy I was very fond of, and since I could not stop crying on account of the loss, mother had sat down on my bed and had begun to sing the few things she knew. She sang badly, out of tune, but, nevertheless, at first I had listened to her just as Mino was listening to me. But after a while the idea of the toy I had lost had slowly begun to distil bitterness into the cup of forgetfulness that mother offered me, and at last it had poisoned everything and had made it, by contrast, utterly intolerable. So at last I had suddenly burst into tears again and mother, out of patience with me, had switched off the light and had gone away, leaving me to cry my heart out in the dark. I was sure that when the deceptive sweetness of my singing had vanished, he would inevitably feel the same anguish, which would be even sharper and more acute by contrast with the sentimental superficiality of my songs; and I was not mistaken. I had been singing for nearly an hour when he interrupted me brusquely. "That'll do," he said. "Your songs bore me stiff." Then he curled up as if he meant to go to sleep, with his back turned to me.

I had foreseen that he would behave in this rude way so I was not too deeply pained. In any case, I did not expect anything else now but unhappiness, and the contrary would have astonished me. I got up from the bed and went to put away the linen I had mended. Then, still in silence, I took off my clothes and slipped into the bed on the side Mino had left free. We lay for some time in silence like that, back to back. I knew he was not asleep and was thinking all the time of one thing; and this knowledge, together with the sharp sense of my own helplessness, provoked a storm of confused, desperate thoughts in my head. I was lying on my side and staring in front of me into a corner of the room as I thought. I could see one of the two suitcases Mino had brought with him from Signora Medolaghi's house, and

old yellow leather case covered with the colored labels of different hotels. Among the rest there was one that showed a square of blue sea, a huge red rock and the word *Capri*. In the half-light, among the dull, opaque furniture, that blue spot seemed luminous, seemed something more than a mere spot; it was a hole through which I caught a glimpse of that strip of distant sea. I had a sudden longing for the sea, so sparkling and lively, in which even the most corrupt and shapeless object is purified, smoothed, rounded, fashioned into something beautiful and clean. I have always loved the sea, even the tamed and crowded beach of Ostia; and the sight of it always gives me a sense of liberty which intoxicates my ears even more than my eyes, as if I were listening to the notes of a wondrous, timeless music floating eternally on its waves. I began to think about the sea, yearning acutely for its transparent waves, which seem to wash not only the body but also the soul, making it light and full of joy with its liquid contact. I told myself that if I could take Mino to the sea, perhaps the immensity, the perpetual motion and sound would produce on him the effect my love alone could not achieve.

"Have you ever been to Capri?" I suddenly asked him.

"Yes," he said, without turning round.

"Is it beautiful?"

"Yes—very."

"Listen," I said, turning round in the bed and putting an arm round his neck. "Why don't we go to Capri? Or some other seaside place? As long as you stay here in Rome, you won't be able to think about anything pleasant. If you have a change of air, I'm sure you'll see everything differently. You'd see lots of things that escape you for the moment. I'm sure it would do you good."

He did not answer at once and seemed to be thinking. "I don't need to go to the sea," he then said. "I could see things differently even here, as you say. All I have to do is to accept what I've done, just as you advised, and

there, I sent off the police, telling them I meant to stay the night with the missionary. I had previously told the non-com. to station a gaol warder—a countryman of his own—at the gate instead of a private, and to tell him to hold his tongue as to the hour I came home. Returning at about five o'clock in the morning, I was admitted by the warder, went straight to my house, which overlooked the parade ground, and got into bed without striking a light. Poruta slept in my room. Daylight and six o'clock came, and I was awakened by the yells of the non-com. parading his men; peeping out, I saw them come slowly rolling on to the drill ground and languidly fall in, some wearing *fatigue kit of cotton*, some *full dress of serge*, some without belts and some without jumpers: one shining light fell in attired in the white "sulu" he slept in, some smoked in the ranks, others chattered, and they drilled like a newly enlisted volunteer company. For half an hour I watched the beauties, and listened to them answering back their non-com., who cursed and beseeched alternately.

Then I buckled on my belts, and walked slowly down my steps and up to the squad, watching them stiffen and their eyes start, as they saw the unexpected apparition of their officer. "I think I will finish the drill, Corporal," I remarked; then to the squad, "Pile arms!" and they piled arms. Then I inspected man after man, ordering each one that I found incompletely dressed to strip to the buff and fall in for physical drill. Only one man, Private Keke, passed inspection; and I made him lance-corporal on the spot. After this, I drilled that unhappy squad until sweat ran down their brown bodies in streams; winding up by sending them at the double straight up against the stockade, at which they instinctively stopped. "I did not tell you to halt, you slack-backed pig-stealers; your meat

A NEW GUINEA RESIDENT MAGISTRATE

tions and tobacco are stopped for a week; forward!" over the stockade that sweating detachment went. "about turn!" Back they came; and I kept them at until they were falling from the top, instead ofumping, from sheer exhaustion. Then I halted them in the parade ground again, and made a little speech; telling them that I was weak from shame at having to do with such a lot of feeble wasters, and that I felt certain the Commandant had made a mistake, and sent Mekeo a sanitary gang—or something of that sort—instead of a detachment of constabulary. Their disgraceful exhibition had made me feel so faint, that I must go and breakfast, but meanwhile they would stand at attention.

I went to breakfast and lingered over it; then I returned to my depressed squad. "You have already lost your meat and tobacco for halting without orders; do it again, and I will clap the whole lot of you into gaol and feed you on pumpkins, until the Commandant can send me some real constabulary from headquarters." Then I marched them into the garden, where, after doubling them about in extended order for some time, I suddenly wheeled them up to about an acre of pineapples—horribly prickly things—and then, "Double! Charge!" Into the awful things went those naked men, whilst I yelled curses at them for breaking line. When they were fairly in the middle, I shouted, "Halt!" and then remarked, "I think you have had your lesson, pick your way out of the prickles and go to your breakfast; I don't think you will want me to do your non-com.'s duty again in a hurry." Leaving the men to crawl out as best they could, I went back to my house, where, shortly after, Corporal Sara came to get braid for Keke's stripe. "They will give no further trouble," he remarked: "they are blood from their thighs to the

Later I had the two priests escorted home, and at the same time sent a message to the patrol, that they were to bully and bang the inhabitants about as much as possible, and also that they were to tell the natives that, if so much as a piece of soft mud touched the good fathers or sisters, I would make them believe that millions of devils were loose among them. "Remind them," I said to the patrol, "of what happened to the two sorcerers climbing my fence, and tell them that I am devising a worse punishment still for them, if they offend further."

The following afternoon, I sent for the village constable of Veipa and withdrew the patrol, as I heard from the priests that all was now quiet, and the people waiting in a chastened frame of mind for the punishment to come. The explanation of the riot, given to me by the village constable, was that several deaths had occurred, and, in compliance with Government Regulations, the bodies had been buried in the allotted cemetery; then several more people died and the village was filled with fear and wailing. Now came the sorcerers' opportunity; and they promptly improved it by preaching to the people, that the plague had come upon them for abandoning the old practices of the tribe, in favour of Government and Mission ways. "Did we have deaths like this, when we buried our dead under the floors of the houses?" they asked, answering themselves, "No!" Then—instigated by the sorcerers—the natives began again to bury their newly dead in the houses, whilst others dug up those already in the cemetery, for removal to the village. The constable and Government chief had asked the fathers to come and help them to persuade the villagers to obey the law; but by the time the fathers could come, feeling between the factions—respectively obeying the constable and the sorcerers—was running high:

arguments, threats, and persuasion having failed, constable started removing the bodies by force, and riot began. "Where is the chief sorcerer?" I asked. "He ran away when the row began," was the reply. "Why did you not arrest him?" "I did suggest," said the v.c., "but he threatened to smite me with wasting sickness, if I touched him."

The village constable then reeled off a list of offenders and law-defying men in his village, which I wrote down, and then sent him off to tell them to come to me at once; they came—about forty of them—some looking sulky or sullen, some angry, and some frightened. "Tell them, Basilio, to sit down in a line in front of me." They sat down; the v.c., glad to get a little revenge, hastening the laggards by sharp blows with his truncheon.

"Now," I remarked, "I have heard a lot about sorcery since I came here, I am going to treat you a little. Basilio, tell them to look at my eyes as I go down the line, and tell me what they notice!" "We will," they answered. I asked, when they had all looked, "what do they see?" "They say your eyes are not as the eyes of other men, alike in colour, but differ one from the other." "Very true," I said, as I stepped back a dozen paces where all could see me plainly. "Now tell them to look at my mouth," and I grinned, showing an excellent set of false teeth. They looked. "Well?" "I see strong white teeth," Basilio interpreted, smothering a grin as he guessed what was coming. Turning my back for a second, I dropped my false teeth into my handkerchief and, swinging round again, exposed a row of toothless gums. A yell of horror and amazement went up, and fearful glances were cast about for somewhere whither to bolt. I swept my handkerchief before my mouth, and again grinned a glistering toothful grin. There were no sulky or defiant glances

now, nothing but looks of abject fear and horror. "Ask them, Basilio, whether in all their villages, there is a sorcerer that can do such a thing as that?" "No," was the answer, "the white chief is greater than them all."

"Now explain to them," I said, "that the white men know more witchcraft than their own sorcerers but they do not practise it, as it is an evil thing. I am going to make things uncommonly hot for the sorcerers in this district: the first one I catch, I will show to you what a feeble thing he is; for I will smell at a glass of clear water and then make him smell it and he will jump into the air and fall as a dead man." A wonderful effect can be obtained with half a wine-glass of strong ammonia, I may remark in passing. "Basilio, tell them I am going to punish them but lightly this time; but if I have to deal with this particular lot again, they will get something to remember. First of all, they will return to the village and remove the corpses to the cemetery; then they will clean up the village thoroughly; after that, they will return here and work in the gardens for a week without pay, and will cool their hot blood by living exclusively upon pumpkins."

The v.c. then asked permission to make a speech to his people; he had been as much surprised as anyone at my performance, but also regarded it as throwing reflected glory upon himself. He pointed out to them that all this trouble had fallen upon them through neglecting his good advice and defying his authority; perhaps now they would see what a pattern he was for them to follow! He then began to take them individually to task, and to take up past misdoings on their part that had escaped retribution; but here I cut the worthy constable short, and told him to conclude his remarks while they cleared the village. I heard

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afterwards that he stood on a platform in Veipa, and inflicted a two hours' oration on his unfortunate people. The next day the village constables from a dozen villages came in, to tell me that the people—with the exception of the Veipa villagers—were burying their dead in their houses, but that all the sorcerers had skipped for the bush.

CHAPTER XIII

My first business now, was to try and find out the nature of the rapid and deadly disease from which the people were suffering, and with this object in view I consulted the priests of the Sacred Heart. The only London Missionary Society man in the district had just left for England. The priests were looking after his Samoan and Fijian teachers, who were all blue with funk, and were also supplying them with medicines. I believe four of the teachers died during the epidemic, as well as a number of the European members of the Sacred Heart. I soon came to the conclusion that the source of the infection was in the water supply of the villages, and ordered that all water for the domestic use of the villagers should be drawn from the San Joseph river, or other big streams, where pollution was practically impossible, instead of from pools near the river. Threats, punishment, persuasion, nothing was of any avail; still the people would persist in drawing and drinking the water from the pools to which they had been in the habit of going.

I rushed through the district with a flying patrol and made the lives of the village constables and chiefs a burden to them; but still the natives died like flies, and still they drank from the pools. In each village I made the village constable give me a list of houses in which bodies had been buried, and then set the police to prod with their bayonets through the earthen floor until the corpses were discovered; whereupon, we made the householder disinter them and plant them

in the cemetery; if there were no cemetery, I laid one out for them. I sent every householder off to gaol in whose house I found a corpse, until Basilio sent to say there would soon be a famine in the Station; then, to prevent this, I levied toll of food upon the villagers, and plundered their gardens if they did not pay. But still the people drank from the pools, and sickened and died.

I called a meeting of chiefs and village constables, and threatened and prayed them to stop the burial in the houses and the drinking of polluted water. "We can't stop it," they said; "you are strong and wise, tell us what to do." I racked my brains, and at last I thought I saw a way out. "Take this message to your people," I said: "I am going myself to poison every hole from which they draw water, except running streams, and they can come and see me do it; after that, I shall burn down every house in which a man is buried, and if I find five corpses in one village, I shall burn the whole village. In the meantime they are all to leave the villages, and camp in shelters half a mile away." Then I wondered how I could make the people believe that their wells and pools were really poisoned; hunting amongst my supply of drugs, I found about half a pound of Permanganate of Potash, a few grains of which, placed in a bucketful of water, is sufficient to produce a red colour. "Ah," I thought to myself, "now for a little sorcery." I carefully filled up two wine glasses, one with Ipecacuanha wine, an emetic; the other with water, coloured by Permanganate to a passable imitation of it. Then I returned to my meeting of chiefs and village constables, carrying the glasses in my hands.

I addressed the meeting in this way. "You see these glasses? They contain a virulent poison, the poison I am going to put in the wells and pools. I am

going to drink one glassful and Maina, v.c., the other but the strength of my magic will save us from dying though you will be able to see what a bad poison it is.' Maina was not at all keen on drinking his brew, but as his brother v.c.'s all told him to rely upon me, and I told him he would get the sack as a v.c., and gaol for disobedience of orders, if he did not, he plucked up courage and swallowed the nauseous draught with many grimaces. I then swallowed mine, passed round cigarettes, and awaited developments. In twenty minutes Maina asked whether I was certain of the efficacy of my protection against the poison I had given him, 'as he was feeling very ill. I explained that I was, and that he would be quite safe, unless at any time he had neglected his duties as a v.c.: should he have done that, he would be extremely ill for a few minutes, and then get quite well again. Somehow or other I think Maina must have been remiss in his duties, for in a few minutes he was most uncommonly sick, after which he rapidly recovered. The meeting then dispersed, fully convinced that my threat of poisoning the water was no idle one, and prepared to explain to the people the colour and nature of the poison I intended using.

Village after village I then visited, drawing from each well or pool a bucketful of water, which I coloured red with Permanganate and exhibited to the natives: after which, I made some hocus pocus passes with my hands over the pool or well, whilst I poured in the mixture, dismally chanting all the time, "Boney was a warrior, Boney was a thief, Boney came to my house and stole a leg of beef." My voice, I may remark, is not a melodious one. At very big pools I constructed a little boat of leaves—like the paper boats made by children—and placing a little gunpowder in it, I focused the rays of the sun through one of the lens removed

my field-glasses, until it exploded in a puff of fire and smoke. Then, gazing severely at the village constable and assembled villagers, I would groan loudly, and explain that the poison devils I had placed in that particular pool were of the most malignant description, and I hoped that they would not be fools enough to allow them to enter their systems through the medium of the water. "Not much!" was the content of their reply; "we are not going to risk our lives of this sort. No! Not even if we have to walk miles for our water."

I sent a report to Blayney describing the symptoms of the sick, and asking for advice. Blayney was a doctor, as well as R.M., the only one besides Sir Ham MacGregor in New Guinea. He replied, "I can't come to help you, I am tied up by this infernal army work; there is no doubt, I think, that the disease is enteric fever. Look to your water supply and drive the people out of the infected houses." I had already done all this, so I merely continued patrols to make sure that the natives were carrying out my orders; the immediate effect being, that the sickness slackened and the deaths dwindled down to almost nothing. "Thank Heaven," I thought, "I have got my hands under." Suddenly a fresh outburst occurred, sweeping like a wave with awful virulence through the people, who were now mostly camped away from the villages.

At my wits' end, I again assembled the chiefs and village constables. "What foolery are you up to now?" I asked. "Are you drinking the water from the poisoned wells, or burying the dead in the villages or houses?" "Oh no," they said, "we have obeyed you most strictly; also we have carried out a precaution suggested by the sorcerers." "What is that?" I demanded. "They have told us that when a death

takes place, the body of the dead person is to be licked by all the relations." Frantic with rage, I jumped to my feet and howled for the Station guard. "Strip the uniform and Government clothes off these men and throw them into gaol until I can devise some means of bringing them to their senses," I yelled, as the police came running up. Pallid with funk, and loudly protesting that they were good and loyal servants of the Government, my village constables and chiefs were hauled away. Soon, from the villages, came streaming in the wives, friends, and relations of the imprisoned men, weeping bitterly and praying me to release their husbands, fathers, brothers, etc. Then I took counsel with Basilio. "The men are not to blame," he said, "it is the sorcerers; you will do no good by punishing the v.c.'s and chiefs, who are trying to help you, merely because they are fools." "Very true; but how can I catch the elusive sorcerers?" I remarked. "The v.c.'s are badly frightened now," said Basilio; "scare them a little more, and they will drop a hint as to the whereabouts of some of them." I had my v.c.'s brought back, and threatened and abused them alternately; they all—with one exception—squirmed, lied, and tried to excuse themselves, and all denied knowledge as to the whereabouts of the sorcerers. "How then did you receive the message from them, as to the licking of the bodies of the dead?" I demanded. Dead silence and more squirms.

Then I turned to the one man who had not lied and excused himself. "What have you to say for yourself?" "Nothing: if you choose to put me in gaol, put me there; but since you came, I have most strictly carried out the orders of the Government, and I have had no communication with sorcerers; neither have I had any deaths in my village since you closed the wells;

also the people of my village have not feared the bodies of the dead." These words having confirmed the truth of this village sorcerer's statement whereupon, I returned his uniform, gave him a small bird of paradise badge (the badge worn by the constabulary), and told him that on the next day he was senior village constable for the district with double pay, and when he visited the Station he should have the right to sleep in the constabulary barracks instead of in the visitors' house. The name of this man was Aia Kapimana, and on his leaving to return to his village, he called up a youth of about sixteen, "My son," he proudly said; "I give him to you as a servant." I didn't want a servant, but not wishing to offend the man, whose feelings I had already most deeply hurt, I said I would keep him for a while. The boy had the same name as his father, "Aia," and was a most smart-looking lad; I sent him to join Poma.

This youth remained in my private service for many months, accompanying me afterwards when I left the Mekeo district to go to the South-Eastern Division; I found him to be always loyal and steady. After he left my service and returned to Mekeo, he was engaged as a private servant by my successor, ~~another~~ Giulianetti, who was a man, like myself, very severe upon the sorcerers: unfortunately for him, however, he was never very popular with the constabulary. One night Giulianetti was sleeping in the house of the local London missionary on the coast, about twenty miles from Mekeo Station, while his police and Aia were sleeping in native houses some distance away. To Aia came a sorcerer and said, "You are to show your master dead; if I could shoot, I would do so; but as I cannot, you must; and if you refuse I shall strike you dead." Aia took a police rifle and, accompanied by the sorcerer, walked up to the Mission house.

Giulianetti was sleeping with a lighted lamp on a chair beside his bed; Aia blew out Giulianetti's brains, then firing another shot at him, fled—as did the sorcerer. The sorcerer, in fording a stream during his flight, was seized by an alligator and severely mangled before he could escape from its jaws; believing then that the alligator was on the side of the Government and that escape was hopeless, he made no further effort to get away, and was secured by the police. Aia either gave himself up to them or was secured by the fathers of the Sacred Heart Mission. These, shortly, were the facts elicited at the trial of Aia and the sorcerer, both of whom were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

At the time the murder took place, I was stationed at Cape Nelson on the north-east coast, and amongst my constabulary were some of the men of the Mekeo detachment, who had been transferred to me there. I have no hesitation now in saying that I am convinced that all the facts as to how Giulianetti was murdered were not elicited at the trial, and that I believe some of Giulianetti's police were concerned in it. Firstly, it was not clear how Aia got the rifle and cartridges without the consent and knowledge of the owner; secondly, Aia swore that Giulianetti was sleeping with his mosquito net raised and a lamp burning, thereby allowing Aia a clear view of him. Now, it is utterly impossible for a European, in the Mekeo district, to sleep without a mosquito net; and to say that a man could sleep unprotected, in a room with a light attracting mosquitoes in myriads, is rank absurdity. If the mosquito net was down—as I am convinced it must have been—Giulianetti's body would not have been visible to the man shooting at him, and some one must have raised it to allow Aia to aim. The shot, according to Aia's statement, was fired from the doorway; this must have been true, for otherwise the flash would have

ched the mosquito net or bed-clothes. Two shots
e fired: now, Aia was a first-class shot, and had—
ording to his own statement—killed Giulianetti
h the first; why, therefore, did he remain to reload
rifle and fire again, after the first shot had alarmed
house? That second shot came from a rifle other
an Aia's I am convinced. Another point to be
nsidered is, that when the sorcerer first commanded
a to shoot Giulianetti and threatened him with
ath if he disobeyed, why did he not appeal for help
the police, who were his friends, and some of whom
me from his own village?

My own opinion is that Aia did tell the police, and
at some of them were concerned in the murder.
his view of mine was shared by my own police at
ape Nelson, and by nearly every member of the
onstabulary with whom I talked. Another reason
had for thinking that the Mekeo detachment—at
that time—would not have been above making away
with an unpopular officer was, that on one occasion,
while they were under Bramell's command, the whole
ot had arranged to fire at him on the parade ground
uring inspection. When the time came, however,
nly one man carried out the plót by raising his rifle,
iring, and missing him at about ten paces; Bramell
ad then deliberately walked up to the man, taken his
smoking rifle from him and led him up to the police
cell, into which he had shoved the offender, after which,
he had resumed his inspection of the squad. Bramell
punished the man afterwards, but, as he was in hot
water at the time at Headquarters, did not report the
incident for fear of—somehow or other—being blamed
himself. The punishment he allotted to the culprit
was a peculiar one, and one that I cannot say com-
mended itself to me, richly though the mutineer
deserved it. At that time there were in the Station

two dark cells, one of which was never used, for the reason that on a previous occasion a man had hanged himself in it, and the police thought it was haunted by his ghost; Bramell gave his would-be murderer twenty-four hours in it, telling him that if he lacked company, he could call the ghost.

The police of Mekeo Station had a most extraordinary yarn of a strange happening there, on the night of Giulianetti's murder (Amadeo, they called him). A group of them were sitting talking together, when one man jumped to his feet, pointed to Giulianetti's house and exclaimed in surprise, "When did Amadeo return?" They all looked, and saw that the house, which had been in darkness, was lit up, and that Giulianetti, clothed in his usual white clothing, was seated in his chair in the open place between the rooms, looking across the parade ground. They all ran up to the house, to ask him how and when he had returned, and where his police were. As the men went up the steps of the house, it became plunged in darkness: puzzled, they called to Giulianetti and struck matches, and to their surprise could not find him; the lamp, which a few seconds before had apparently been burning brightly, was dead and cold. This story was told me by Sergeant Kimai, who was not an imaginative person.

The attempted murder of Bramell by his police was afterwards the cause of a serious quarrel between him and me, and for a time we were not on speaking terms, though we lived in the same house and dined at the same table. I did not know that Bramell had not reported the matter, and one day, in the course of casual conversation with the Government Secretary referred to it. Mr. Musgrave pricked up his ears, asked me several questions, and then ordered me to put in a written report; I demurred, pointing out that

the alleged shooting at Bramell by the police was all hearsay and Station gossip. Muzzy insisted; whereupon I made out a garbled version of the affair, to which Bramell had no difficulty in giving a flat denial. He, however, then took it into his head that I had been trying to get him into trouble, and "words" ensued, which resulted, as I have said, in a total split between us.

The quarrel ended in a funny way. I had a temporary Port Moresby boy engaged as a servant, who of course knew of the split between Bramell and myself; coming home one day unexpectedly, I found the young reprobate smoking one of my pipes and brushing his hair with my brushes, whereupon I cuffed him soundly. The boy whimpered, and I told him to shut up or he would get a little more; this had the desired effect, and I left. Mr. Musgrave at this time made pets of the Hanuabada boys, as they were called, and always came down like a sledge hammer on any officer who struck one, for whatever cause. After I had gone, the boy sat down outside, waited until he saw Mr. Musgrave in the distance, and then set up a terrific bellowing, as though he had been half murdered. Bramell heard the howls and asked the boy what the row was about; the boy said I had hit him, and he was howling to attract Mr. Musgrave's attention: Bramell promptly cuffed the howler into silence, and kept him with him until the Government Secretary was safely out of sight. I heard of the incident from the boy, and when Bramell came home that night and went to his side of the verandah, I called after him, "Bramell, have a drink?" He came, had a drink, remarked that, "We were two fools," and buried the hatchet.

After these digressions I must return to my epidemic and the Mekeo district. I released my chiefs and

v.c.'s, after uttering the most blood-curdling threats as to what would happen if they indulged in any more corpse-licking. Again I raced through the district with a patrol, burying the dead and harrying the natives, as well as snapping up a sorcerer here and there. On an average the patrol covered twenty miles a day, until the men and myself were as thin as catgut, and as tired as a sweated seamstress, from work and worry. We had our prisoners, sorcerers principally, handcuffed on to a chain; one evening, so tired out were we, that I commanded a halt in the middle of a grass patch and told the men to sleep where we stopped. Looking through my men for some one to take charge of the prisoners, I found they were all so utterly done up as not to be relied on to keep awake for half an hour. Aia was the only fresh person, he having sat in charge of our effects, while the constabulary and I worked. Calling Aia, I told him that, seeing the state the patrol was in, I meant to handcuff him on to the chained prisoners, in order that, if during the night they tried to bolt, he might alarm us. Aia protested, but handcuffed he was: in a few minutes I noticed that his hands were so small that he could slip them out of the handcuffs; accordingly I had one clasp of the handcuffs fastened to the prisoners' chain and the other locked round his ankle, and I also lent him my heavy hunting knife—a most formidable weapon. Then we all slept, the dead heavy sleep that only a tired lot of men know.

Shortly before dawn, one of my men awoke and noticed that Aia and the prisoners had disappeared. He at once awakened the camp, and spreading out in every direction like spokes from the hub of a wheel, one of the men ran into the chain gang, who were soon secured again. They had watched us go to sleep, and had waited until Aia slept also, when they had

suddenly seized him and gagged him with their belts—disgusting things those belts were too—then, muffling the clink of the chain with the remainder of their belts, they had slunk away, carrying Aia upside down with them. He had the extreme pleasure of hearing them discuss how they would cut off his ankle with my knife to release themselves, when sufficiently remote from the camp. This incident showed me clearly that it was high time we returned to the Station; for when a patrol is so worn out that it cannot find a man to mount guard, it is evident that its usefulness has ended.

At Mekeo it was my custom to spend a couple of hours on Saturday afternoons attending to any simple surgical cases, or broken bones, brought to me by the village constable. Sometimes I got one that was anything but simple. For instance, on one occasion a native came in with his shoulder all plastered up with mud and leaves; he told me that he had fallen from a cocoanut palm the week before and hurt his shoulder, and that it was so painful that he could not sleep at night and that he meditated suicide. In passing, I might remark that a favourite New Guinea method of suicide is to climb a cocoanut tree, and then drop head first to the ground. I examined the shoulder and found it badly dislocated, but apparently nothing broken. I struggled with that shoulder for a good hour, the man's howls meanwhile alarming the country for a couple of miles around; then I gave it up in despair. "Are you not going to mend me?" he asked in an injured tone. "Mend you, yes," I replied. "But I shall have to hurt you a bit, and you make my head ache with your howls." "I won't say another word," he said. Then I sent to the whaleboat for blocks and tackle, which I attached to his arm, after lashing him firmly to pegs driven into the ground; in five minutes,

by the aid of that tackle and some lusty police, the shoulder was back in position, and during the whole process the man did not give so much as a whimper.

Another native came in, and exhibited a lot of nasty long gashes about his arms, body and head. "How did you collect these?" I asked. "I got clawed by a bush alligator," he replied. "Don't tell me silly lies, there are no alligators in the bush; alligators live in the water," I retorted. "There are water alligators and bush alligators," he said; "bush alligators have sharp claws and climb trees." "Do you mean iguanas?" I asked; "the reptile whose skin you use for your drums?" "No, I don't," he said; "the skin of the bush alligator is no good for drums." I dressed the man's wounds; and when next I met the Sacred Heart missionaries, I asked them whether they had ever heard a native yarn about a bush alligator. They had frequently heard of it, but had never seen the beast. Old Bushimai, chief of the Binandere, once showed me a lot of scars about his body, which he had got as a young man in an encounter with—as he put it—a devil. Bushimai and his wife were walking through the bush, he being unarmed (I may say he was an enormously powerful man); suddenly the wife, who was following, gave a yell, and, turning round, he saw her in the grasp of a beast strange to him; he got her away, but in so doing sustained the scars he showed me. Bushimai's description of the beast was like nothing either on the earth, in the sea or sky; he was, however, perfectly satisfied with his own opinion—that it was a devil.

One day, whilst I was engaged attending to my patients, an old woman appeared, followed by a man hobbling along with the aid of a stick; the woman staggered under an enormous bunch of bananas, which she dropped at my feet. "There," she said, "you cut my husband with your knives and cure him, and I will

pay you these bananas." I looked at the man, and found he had elephantiasis in one limb, which was swollen to an enormous size; I shook my head, and told the woman that I could do no good. "Yes, you can," she said; "I have heard of wonderful things that you have done. I suppose the payment is not enough, but we have nothing else with which to pay you." Basilio at last made the woman understand that there were things beyond my power, and this was one; and to make clear to her that it was not for lack of adequate payment, we made her presents of turkey-red twill, tobacco and beads, and also gave her husband an adze, the tool most prized by the Mekeo natives; but in spite of all, it was a very sad couple that went away. A leper once came to me, and he also had to depart disconsolately.

One of my difficulties at Mekeo was to make the natives keep the road and tracks clean; each village was compelled by law to keep the roads throughout its own lands clean and open, and each village did its best to dodge doing so. One village in particular gave me a lot of trouble; say what I would, and do what I could, they would not clean their roads. Mohu was the name of this village. At last, in exasperation, I threatened, that if at my next visit the tracks were not cleaned, I should shoot the village pigs. Time went on, I visited Mohu again and found the roads worse than ever. I caught several of the prominent men, and cursed them; then I said, "You know what I told you last time, that I should shoot your pigs if you did not obey me; now I am going to shoot your largest and best pig, as a warning that I am in earnest. At the end of a week I shall return and kill the rest, unless you clean the roads." The police drove out an uncommonly fine pig; I pointed it out to the chief and said, "I am going to kill that pig." "Kill

it, if you want to," he said contemptuously. Shot the pig was, and I left the village, the chief and natives not appearing to worry much about the killing. Hardly had I gone a mile, before a fat Belgian brother of the Sacred Heart Mission came running after me. "For why?" he asked, "for why, Monseigneur, have you slain the pig of my lord the Bishop?" I sent humble apologies to the Mission and offers of payment for the pig; the apologies were accepted, the payment they declined, telling me that they hoped I should succeed in making the lazy Mohu villagers clean their roads. Jumping with temper, I returned to Mohu, arrested the chief and all his most prominent followers, and sentenced them to a month's gaol with hard labour. "We can only get three days' simple imprisonment for neglecting to clean roads," he complained. "Yes, you villain," I replied, "but you are now getting a month's hard labour, as accessory before the fact, to the stealing of a pig; and unless your roads are cleaned within a week, I'll forget my judgment and make it six months." Cleaned those roads were, within the week.

Mohu was a village that had always given a great deal of trouble; once it even went to the length of fighting Sir William MacGregor. A Station of the Sacred Heart was established near it, and the people, not caring about sending their children to school, tried to drive the missionaries away by depositing filth close to the Mission house. I cured them of that trick, by making the prominent men clean up, and carry away the mess, with their bare hands; they were all very angry, but one man especially so. Father Victor told me that one day afterwards, when he was walking towards the village, this particular individual slipped out in front of him from behind a bush, with bow bent, and arrow pointed straight at the father; he yelled at the man who then apologized and explained

at he thought the father was I. I sent for the man, and gave him three days' solitary confinement on a mpkin diet. "How do you like that?" I asked him the end. He candidly said that words could not express his opinion of it, that he had never felt so lonely or so empty in his life before. "Very good, then," told him, "don't you play the fool any more with your bow and arrows, or you will get ten years of ." Some time afterwards I made this individual a village constable, which position he filled in a very satisfactory manner.

Mekeo Station was absolutely the worst place for snakes I have ever known; they were there in all sizes, from pythons, that came after my fowls, to deadly little reptiles, that coiled up in bunches of bananas. If one sent a boy up a cocoanut tree, he had to beat at the bunches of nuts with a stick, before putting his hand in, to make certain that there were no snakes concealed. It is a fact, not generally known, that snakes climb trees in exactly the same manner that they go along the ground: they don't coil round them, as picture books show, but I think they must grip the bark by elevating their scales; when they want to come down, they merely release themselves and fall like a wet piece of rope. I've only known two men in my life who really liked snakes: one was Armit, and the other was a camp-keeper he had, called Rohu. Once at Cape Nelson, I got my knee-cap knocked to one side, and went up by boat to get Armit, who was then stationed at Tamata, to fix it up for me. Rohu and Armit had half a dozen tame snakes, which used to crawl over their beds and chairs, in fact they were everywhere; if either of their owners wished to sit in a canvas chair, very frequently he had to pick a snake out of it first. To the contempt of the pair, I declined a bed in the house in favour of a bunk in the police barracks. "They

f an hour, then sent up to the rival store to see whether he was there, only to learn that he had called his native boys and gone straight back to his home.

The Binandere or Mambare people are the natives in British New Guinea who have no fear of snakes; I have seen them snatch up a poisonous snake by the tail, and crack its head against a tree.

Most of the Port Moresby snakes are harmless. I remember one of Captain Barton's men being bitten by a snake, and as a precaution he filled the man's mouth with whisky, and ordered the remainder of the party to keep him walking about, and not on any account to allow him to go to sleep. Unfortunately he forgot to set a time limit; the result was, that on the following morning, the feeble voice of a man bewailing a sad fate was heard, and it was discovered that the natives had kept their unlucky companion walking up and down the whole night long. Upon the man recovering from the comatose slumber into which he promptly fell when released, he vowed that in the future—if he were bitten by fifty snakes—he would not say a word, or make a sound, but would keep it quiet, as no snake-bite could be half as bad as a snake-bite in the mouth.

At Mekeo I got my first taste of black-water fever, that strange form of malaria of which the cause is not known; and in which quinine—the sovereign remedy for ordinary malaria—is poison. I have never known black-water outside the Mekeo and Mambare districts in New Guinea; the name describes one symptom, and another is a constant retching and vomiting of bile. Basilio and the police did all they possibly could for me, which of course, except for the constant attention, did not amount to much; hour after hour the constant retching relieved one another, holding my head and supporting me during the violent paroxysms of vomiting.

funny little interlude occurred, though. The sorcerers in the gaol inquired the reason of the silence and gloom over the Station, and were told by the warders that I was dying; whereupon they set up a loud chant of joy. The constabulary, sitting in a circle round my bed, heard the chant; several of them got up, went to their rifles, took out the cleaning rods, and paid a visit to the gaol, from whence soon came the wails of suffering sorcerers.

"What can we do?" said Basilio at last; "you die fast." "Dig my grave under the flagstaff, where I can hear the feet of the men at drill," I replied. Then appeared Fathers Bouellard and Vitali, whom Aia in despair had gone to fetch; they brought me white wine and bismuth. "You are in time for the funeral, Father," I gasped out, "but that is about all." "Oh, my friend," said Father Bouellard, "I want but one little second at the end, and your soul is safe; but we are not going to let you die if we can help it; Sister Antoinette is very skilful with medicines, but as she cannot come here, we will take you to the Mission." The police picked up my camp bed and carried me to the Mission house, where they nursed me back to life. When stronger, the police carried me to the Monastery at Yule Island, where Dr. Seligman, who was then visiting New Guinea with Professor Haddon's party, came along and completed the cure, and also told me the name of the cheerful complaint from which I had been suffering. I had enteric some months later, but I call that an infantile thing alongside black-water.

After my convalescence, I was had rather badly one night by the Father Superior, who, by the way, was a most charming man, and was afterwards sent as Parish Priest to Thursday Island. The fever had left me very weak and with a terrific appetite, which the good fathers did their best to appease with all they had

to offer. Having slept some time, I woke with a horrible sinking feeling in my tum-tum. "Faith," I thought, "I should like a good stiff whisky and soda." I made my way to the Father Superior's room and, rousing him up, explained that I had a dreadful feeling of coldness in my tummy, and inquired if he could give me something to allay it. "Ah," he said, "I know the very thing for you." No sooner said than done, and he handed me a tumbler half full of a horrid tonic draught of iron and other beastliness, which I had to drink; then I slunk back to bed. Long afterwards I told Ballantine how I had aroused the worthy priest to get a drink, and received a bolus instead. He meanly told the Mission, for he said that the story was too good for them to miss. "Why, Mr. Monckton," asked the Father Superior, "why, if you wanted cognac, did you not say cognac?"

When sufficiently recovered, I took passage in one of Burns, Philp's vessels, the *Clara Ethel*, which Inman now commanded. At Port Moresby I reported myself to the Government Secretary, told him the tale of my adventures, and praised the priests of the Sacred Heart as a fine lot of men—my predecessor at Mekeo had always quarrelled with them. "I did not know that you were a Roman Catholic," said Mr. Musgrave, when I had finished. "I am not," I replied; "I am a Churchman, and a Churchman I'll die; but if all Roman Catholics were like the members of the Sacred Heart Mission, there soon wouldn't be any other Church in the world." Muzzy was a dissenter of some sort, and regarded the Church of Rome with aversion. "Get away and report yourself to his Excellency," he growled. I went over to Government House, and reported myself. Sir William told me to send for my things, and take up my quarters at Government House; then he said, "I had a cough like you once, a liver cough;

I got rid of it. Captain Jones got one; he died. You should go away for a change; but I can't spare you at present; you had better take a trip to Thursday Island in the *Merrie England*: she is taking the Judge west, and then going on there for coal."

When the *Merrie England* sailed, I accordingly went with her, and the trip proved to be a truly dreadful one. We had on board one mid-wife and two domestic servants, who had been in the service of the wives of some of the Government officers in Port Moresby; as each of these women took up a cabin, and we were—with the exception of the Governor—carrying our full complement of people, the accommodation was limited. I occupied a settee in the cabin of Commander Curtis; a settee that, when we struck really bad weather in the Gulf of Papua, I abandoned for the security of the floor. No ship that I have ever known could roll like the *Merrie England*: one night, whilst we were at dinner, she rolled so prodigiously as to tear the saloon tables from their fastenings, and rolled tables, men, table gear, and food backwards and forwards across the cabin, nearly crushing the lives out of Judge Winter and myself, who happened to be on the lee side when the first roll came. The sea-sick white women heard the din, and thought the ship was sinking; accordingly, they rose from their bunks, attired merely in their night things, and rushed into the saloon, where of course they were promptly swept off their legs into the chaos of swearing men and smashing crockery. That night was the sole occasion upon which Judge Winter was known to use bad language; but I think even a judge is justified in making remarks when he finds the edge of a heavy table, crowned by a dozen men, resting on his liver. At last we disentangled ourselves, dragged out the shrieking women, and shoved them back into their cabins. "Why the

blank blank don't you go and attend to those women?" yelled the skipper at one of the stewards, who was grovelling about amongst the mixture on the floor. "I'm looking for my teeth, sir," he said. The unfortunate man had lost his false teeth in the excitement.

At Daru we found De Lange, Assistant R.M., carrying on Bingham Hely's duties; Hely, R.M., at the time being on leave, and occupied in dying in a Thursday Island hospital. De Lange was afterwards drowned in the mouth of the Fly River, his whaleboat having capsized in a bad tide rip some four or five miles from land: his police started to swim for the shore, carrying him with them; but finding that—hampered by him—the police could not make headway against the tide and current, and that probably all would be drowned, he ordered them to release him, and, bidding them "Good-bye," put his hands above his head and went down like a gallant man. Cruel, certainly, was the toll New Guinea took of her first officers.

Returning from Thursday Island, the *Merrie England* landed me again at Hall Sound, where, after having sent in to the Station for my police, I returned to my duties. On the first parade after I got back to the Station, I addressed my men as follows: "That you are a lot of rogues and villains, I am convinced, and also that you have got fat from idleness during my absence; but what steel instruments do you want most?" "Razors," said some; "scissors," said others. "Ah, you scoundrels, I can read your hearts even in Thursday Island." Then solemnly I presented each man with a razor and a pair of scissors. "If ever you kick again and the prisoners sing," said Keke, "we'll stick all their tongues out."

CHAPTER XIV

AT this first parade, after my return to Mekeo, when I was inspecting the men I found one of them all gasped about the face and body. "What have you been up to?" I asked; "more pine-apples?" He grinned sheepishly, and explained that whilst I was away his grandfather had died, and so he had cut himself all over with broken glass as a sign of mourning. "The Queer is your grandfather and grandmother and all the rest of your relations," I told him, "and you belong to her. The next man I catch cutting himself about as a sign of mourning will get something to mourn for." Exasperating people they were, one never knew what they would do next; Kipling's definition of a native as "half devil and half child," is a very true one.

The signs of mourning were almost as varied as the tribes themselves, and it may be of interest if I mention one or two of the other methods in vogue. The Good enough Islanders had a horrid habit of cutting of their finger joints with bits of obsidian, *i.e.* volcanic glass: until, after a sickly season, the hands of some of the men were merely bleeding stumps. The Suau cut down the cocoanut trees belonging to the deceased until Sir William MacGregor passed a Regulation forbidding it; and the Kaili Kaili used to hurl themselves face forwards into the sea, and inhale salt water until they nearly burst their lungs.

One of the troubles of the Mekeo Government

icer was a periodic friction between the members of the Sacred Heart and London Missions, concerning the limitations of their respective districts. Sir William MacGregor had, with his usual perspicacity, foreseen the likelihood of difficulties and sectarian disturbances, should rival denominations come into contact in the same village or district, and had made Regulation allotting each Mission a special sphere of influence. The London Mission being first on the field, and scattering its men over a very wide stretch of coast line, received the lion's share; its territory extended from East Cape in the extreme east, to the Dutch boundary in the extreme west. The Sacred Heart Mission had merely Yule Island, containing a very small population of natives, at most a couple of hundred; one tiny village on the coast, and the actual district of Mekeo; it did not, however, include Maiva which was in the London area. The Sacred Heart, having occupied all its available territory, wished to extend its borders, and cast envious eyes upon the large unoccupied portions belonging to the London Mission. When, having sent in its priests, it began work in those parts. Bramell, acting under orders from Port Moresby, promptly pulled down their houses and ordered them back.

I was appointed to the district just while matters were at this stage. "What are we to do?" the priests asked me. "Our orders from home are to extend our work, but the Government will not let us." "I am very sorry for you," I told them, "but I cannot help you, unless you can persuade the London Mission to resign their right to some of the coast line." "They won't do that," said the priests. "Then I am afraid I must pull your houses down, if you trespass on the country." Those brave Frenchmen then set to work to bore a road right into the heart of New Guinea.

amongst the wildest of the tribes, and seek converts there. When I left New Guinea, they had penetrated with their road, which was fit for horses, for over sixty miles into the interior, and had found in the mountains a large field for their labours. I have known many brave men in my time, but none more brave than those priests and their ascetic chief, the Archbishop of Navarre. The Archbishop, and the fathers that I knew, are now all dead; may their souls enjoy a peace and rest that their bodies never knew. "Let the Sacred Heart of Jesus be everywhere known," was the motto of their order; rather should it have been, "Courage, mon ami, it is the will of the Good God," the words for ever in their mouths in times of trouble and tribulation. I am not a Roman Catholic, but one of my most pleasant memories of the Mekeo district is of one occasion, when I had halted my men on a track, and the Archbishop and Father Bouellard passed by. "Stand to your arms!" I yelled at the men, as I saw the good old man coming. "Shoulder!" "Present arms!" As the rifles clashed up into the salute, the Archbishop stopped. Looking at us, he said, "My blessing will not hurt the Protestant soldiers." So he blessed us and passed on.

While I was at Mekeo, Sir William MacGregor departed from New Guinea. The Government Secretary sent a notice to all officers within call, inviting them to come and bid him farewell. On account of some district trouble I was prevented from going, but fortunately had an opportunity of bidding him good-bye on board the *Merrie England*, which touched at Hall Sound on the way to Thursday Island. I was not sorry afterwards that I had missed the official ceremony at Port Moresby, as I heard that most of the men present had broken down lamentably, and wept as the vessel steamed away. Many an

Administrator has since come and gone in New Guinea, but none have ever left such an awful void behind them as Sir William MacGregor's departure created; and I doubt whether any other will ever do so again.

About my only relaxation from duty at Mekeo was an occasional afternoon's shooting with the fathers; never shall I forget those shooting parties, or the way my sides ached from laughing, the first time I took part in one. Pigeons of all descriptions—from the enormous plumed Goura, down to a little dove—were very plentiful; and there was also a lake, a few miles from Mekeo Station, which simply swarmed with wild geese, duck, and all kinds of water-fowl. Game formed a pleasant change from the everlasting luke-warm tinned meat, of which my usual fare consisted. We assembled at one of the Mission Stations, when I naturally thought we should at once get to business; not so, however. First, we must drink success to the chase; then each good father possessed a dog of sorts, which he had taught to do all kinds of tricks, and which the proud owner of the mongrel then exhibited; after that, I had to inspect and admire each man's gun. "My God!" I exclaimed softly to myself, as in turn I examined the rubbish in which the owners took such pride. The good fathers were all deadly poor; twenty pounds a year was all they had, with which to find everything—food, clothing, and all else; and their guns were the cheapest and vilest of Belgian make, things I expected to see burst every time they were fired. My gun, a plain old seven-guinea Bland's keeper, which had seen many years of hard service, rose tremendously in my estimation, after looking at those Belgian affairs; for it, at all events, could be trusted not to blow my head off; its very plainness, however, did not appeal to my brother sportsmen, for though they politely praised

it, I could see that the tassels and brass of their girths were more to their liking.

At last, all preliminaries completed, we started under the command of Father Bouellard; one godfather merrily chanting a gay little French song in praise of La Chasse, and another one tooting on a round horn. One member of our party wore an enormous old-fashioned hunting knife, gaily caparisoned with cords and tassels, the sort of thing that might prove useful for cutting collops off a wild boar; we were, however, in search of feathered game. When we had left the village a few hundred yards behind us, Father Bouellard sternly ordered silence, and we all began to walk with the stealth of wild Indians; the fathers marched with unloaded guns, I was pleased to observe, as I frequently found myself looking down the muzzle of the gun of the man in front of me, and being poked in the ribs by that of the man behind. Suddenly Father Bouellard stopped and held up his hand; we all halted, and I peered to find out what I had discovered, but could see nothing except a little dove—hardly bigger than a tom-tit—sitting on a bough across the track. "A pigeon," he whispered in a voice of suppressed excitement. He pulled a cartridge from his bag, inserted it into his gun and cocking the hammer, raised the gun to take aim; but when he went the gun into the air and away flew the tiny dove. "My gun was too quick," remarked Father Bouellard. "Well, I'm d—d!" I quietly exclaimed to myself, and the other sportsmen accepted the statement in perfect faith. At the sound of the shot, the assorted mongrel dogs began yapping into the scrub, while the horn tooted, and their masters shrieked shrilly for them to return. The excitement having subsided, we resumed our stealthy march.

Again our leader held up his hand, and loaded his

in; the squalling of a parrot pointing out the quarry
 his time. The father fired, the parrot fell squalling
 from the tree, the mongrels dashed at the bird, one of
 them securing it; the sportsmen hurled themselves
 upon the curs, each man grabbing his own: while the
 one with the bird fled into the bush, hotly pursued by
 his master and Father Bouellard. I could not help;
 I could only roll against the nearest tree and nearly
 suffocate with laughter. At last the dog with the bird
 was caught, the mangled remains of the parrot dragged
 from its mouth, and once more we resumed our march.
 Father Bouellard having blooded his gun, took his
 place in the rear, and another sportsman took the
 father's place, I declining the honour. By the time,
 we reached the lake, the fathers had collected a large
 assortment of birds; most of them either nearly blown
 to bits by being shot sitting at the closest possible
 range, or torn to pieces by the curs. There was
 not a game bird in the lot, for the mongrels and
 the horn saw to it that they were kept a good mile
 away.

Upon our arrival at the lake, while the Mission boys
 and my police prepared some canoes for us, Father
 Bouellard and another priest went off to stalk some
 wood-duck sitting in a tree. Presently there came a
 shot, followed instantly by the screams of an excited
 Frenchman; the men with me listened, and then
 exclaimed in horror, "He says the good father is shot!"
 We tore off to the spot, only to find Father Bouellard
 sitting on the ground, ruefully contemplating the tip
 of a blackened and bleeding finger; while his companion
 wept, screamed, and embraced the father alternately.
 I examined the finger, and found the damage was but
 slight. It seems that the two sportsmen had exchanged
 guns for a shot; sneaking under the wood-duck, his
 companion was taking aim, when Father Bouellard

SOME EXPERIENCES OF

noticed some dirt on the muzzle of his cherished gun; he was in the act of brushing the dirt off with his fingers, just as that infamous piece chose to go off "too quick" again. Separating into canoes, we soon got a heavy bag of duck and pygmy geese, the latter quite the best game bird in New Guinea. The method of the fathers was simple in the extreme: they merely sneaked their canoes up to within thirty or forty yards of a flock of feeding duck, and blazed both barrels into the brown of them; after which they would put in an excited, gesticulating, and noisy half-hour, chasing and shooting the cripples. I concealed my canoe in a patch of reeds, and had lively sport with the birds which the fathers kept putting up and driving over my gun. Excited, tired, and laden with duck, we wended our homeward way; and once more songs in praise of *La Chasse* and the tootling of the horn enlivened our weary footsteps.

At the end of some four or five months, the Mekeo district was in a condition of satisfactory order; the roads were clean and in good repair, the sickness had apparently disappeared from among the villagers, the bodies of those that did die, or were killed by snakes or in other ways, were buried in the cemetery, and the sorcerers were hiding their diminished heads. Then I got enteric myself, and narrowly missed pegging out, after which I sent in my resignation. One bout of black-water, another of enteric, with a few odd doses of malaria thrown in, were bad enough; but when they were coupled with work amongst a tribe I disliked, I thought it was too much of a good thing altogether.

Leaving Mekeo in due course, I went again to the Eastern Division, where I recruited my health, cruising with Moreton in the *Siai*. Whilst I was thus occupying my time, Shanahan, one of Green's successors in the

A NEW GUINEA RESIDENT MAGISTRATE

Northern Division, died of combined malaria and dysentery. Already since Green's death, Stuart-Russell, Chief Government Surveyor, and Butterworth, Commandant of Constabulary, had put in a term there and been invalided. During one of my periods of absence from Samarai with Moreton, Judge Winter came there looking for me to succeed Shanahan, the Judge being then Acting Administrator. Fortunately for me, I was away: therefore, as the position had to be filled at once, he appointed Armit; I very much doubt whether, had I been sent to the Mambare in my then state of health, I should have lasted six months.

Returning from the Mambare in the *Merrie England*, Judge Winter sent me off in her to relieve Campbell, R.M. and Warden for the South-Eastern Division, the easiest and healthiest division in the Possession. With the exception of the mining work at Woodlark Island, my duties consisted of sailing from one small island to another and hearing petty cases; there was not an island in the division that one could not walk across in a day, and, if one wished, the boat could be anchored every night.

A. M. Campbell, the man I relieved, possessed a perfect mania for office work, tidiness, and writing reports; if a constable cut his toe or a prisoner sneezed, Campbell could manage to make a two-page report of the incident. When the *Merrie England* reached Mivani, the Government Station for the Division, we found the patrol vessel, the *Murua*, had been wrecked. Campbell was no sailor, and his crew were fair-weather men; so accordingly, on a strong gale coming up, they had anchored in the harbour and made for the safety of the shore. The *Murua's* anchor chain was made of galvanized things, which in her previous career had never met a strain; consequently, the anchor broke the

ride out a moderate gale, they snapped, and she—being without a crew—was blown up on the nearest reef. A white prisoner at Nivani, named Clancy, upon the return of calm weather, had dived and tacked canvas over the vessel's holes; then it was found that, by fitting her with some extra pumps, manned by relays of constabulary, she could be towed to Samarai by the *Merrie England*, where she could be repaired upon the slip.

I was not pleased, as I saw the unpleasant prospect looming before me of having to do the district work, in the absence of the *Murua*, in a whaleboat; the whaler would be safe enough, but when under sail one could have no awning, and would therefore be alternately grilled by the sun and wet through by every passing shower. The *Merrie England* sailed, leaving me to my work. The first thing to which I turned my attention was, as usual, the detachment of police: the Commandant, while there, had fallen them in with the travelling patrol, but in three minutes had dismissed them to their barracks in despair; they were all, with the exception of a corporal, locally recruited by Campbell and trained by him. They were an uncommonly clean and tidy looking lot, very polite and attentive, excellent body or house servants, and taught to salute on every possible occasion; a man could not even hand one a cake of bath soap without saluting as he gave it, and again when he left. "Corporal," I asked (a corporal being in charge of the ten men forming the detachment), "what are the hours of parade here, and how often do you have musketry instruction?" "I fall the men in once a week," he replied, "and we never have musketry instruction." "My stars!" I said; "what do you teach them?" "I teach them right-hand salute, left-hand salute, officers' and general salute," was the answer; "that's all Mr. Campbell

ants." I groaned. "You will fall them in at half-past six every morning, and at five o'clock every evening whilst I am here," I ordered, "beginning this evening."

I went to the first parade, and found that—beyond saluting—the men knew absolutely nothing of drill: their rifles were spotlessly clean, but several were out of order, and the men ignorant of the component parts of their arms; most of them had never fired a shot. When I snapped out an order, as I had been accustomed to do with my hard-bitten devils of the Mekeo detachment, instead of a brisk movement following it, they would shiver and wilt like a lot of scared valets. "My Faith, what would you be like in a fight?" I asked them. "There are no fights in the south-east," they said, "but we should like to be made the same as the other police; we are ashamed now when we meet them, and the corporal cries." "Well he might," I remarked, "for such a lot of sleek pussy cats I have never yet met." Then I put them through a sweating hour of recruit drill; the corporal, who had once known his work, soon remembered the drill, and began to take hold again. Clancy, the white prisoner undergoing sentence for manslaughter, was a handy man, and, after I had once shown him how to take to pieces and assemble a rifle, I made him take a class and instruct each of the police how it was done. When I left the south-east, I had those men cocking their caps at a rakish angle, and walking with a very passable imitation of the swagger of the fighting constabulary of the mainland.

Campbell had been in the Customs at Tonga; he was, while there, a Corporal, a Colonel, or a Field-Marshal in the King of Tonga's "Guards," I never quite knew which. He had a wondrous uniform which he had brought from there, and which he donned on state

occasions: Moreton and Armit swore that from it, they never could decide whether he was horse or foot, sapper or gunner; and the confusion was made worse by the addition of epaulets and spurs. Anyhow, it was a harmless conceit, amused Campbell, and hurt no one else: perhaps it is rather unkind of me, while peacefully farming in New Zealand, to laugh at a man still writing interminably in a New Guinea office; my only excuse is, that I am trying to picture New Guinea as I knew it.

Among my office papers were numerous applications, from miners on Woodlark Island, for leases and reefing claims, also notices of pending litigation; they were all nicely docketed and filed, with copies of acknowledging letters, but apparently nothing had been done, and the men were getting frantic. I put in a month visiting islands, and then, not caring to carry my Court Registers and books in the whaler, I went to Samarai, to find out what had become of the *Murua*. I discovered that she had been handed over to Symons, who in his turn had handed her over to carpenters for repairs: the carpenters—being busy—had merely planted her on a mud bank, where she lay, with her decks warped and ruined by the sun, and her hull full of borers; clearly she was now going to be a three months' job. After cursing Symons very thoroughly, and the carpenters as well, I sought out Moreton and reproached him. "I can't help it," he said, "*I have nothing to do with the vessel, and Symons is now so spoilt by Headquarters that I can do nothing with him.*"

I learnt from Moreton that he had some awkward work on hand in the Trobriands and at Ferguson Island, for which he had not a sufficient force: I accordingly suggested that, if he would take me to Woodlark Island first to hold my Warden's Court, I

would then join him with my police, who by now were fairly efficient in their work; a plan to which he readily agreed.

Moreton and I therefore sailed in the *Siai* for Woodlark, where we put in a strenuous time. He took all the police court, civil and native cases for me; whilst I held the Warden's Court, dealing with multitudinous applications and technical work. Moreton's time was limited, as native affairs in his own district were pressing; accordingly, I sat night and day, to get through the work in the Warden's Court. I had no clerk or assistant, and as there were many forms to be filled up and signed, all of which carried a fee for which receipts had to be given, I stationed my corporal at the door of the Court room, with his cartridge pouch open. As I granted each application and wrote out a receipt, I told the applicant the amount, and that he was to pay the corporal at the door, for I had no time to count money or weigh gold-dust; and it says a lot for the honesty of those men, that afterwards when I weighed the gold-dust and counted the cash in the corporal's pouch, I found the amount to be in excess of what was due. A sweet time that excess of money gave me later on with the Treasurer; having sent it all through with the duplicate receipts and returns, he demanded why they did not tally. When he received my explanation that it was due to overpayment by miners, he wanted to know why I had not returned the surplus to the owners; and when I explained that I did not know who the owners were, he censured me for the "grave laxity in supervising payments of money due to Government."

While we were at Woodlark, I had one very unpleasant case. The miners presented me with a petition, praying for the removal of a man named Brown, who was a drunken dissolute ex-pugilist, and

who spent his time in jumping the claims of weak or elderly men, and then demanding a payment to quit; if they did not pay, he would post a notice stating the title to the claim was in dispute, which thereby caused all work to cease until the next sitting of the Warden's Court, sometimes months later. I told the petitioners that I could not deport a man, but would call on Brown to find sureties to keep the peace, and that, if he failed to find them, I would send him to gaol. Sending for Brown, I read the charge to him, and told him I wanted two men to go bail for him to the extent of fifty pounds each, otherwise I should be obliged to gaol him. He produced a hundred pounds and said, "Hold that." "That's no good," I said; "I want two men to guarantee you, and I will give you till to-morrow to find them." Brown went off, but could find no one to stand bail for him; so, in a rage, he went to a tent owned by a man with a considerable knowledge of medicine, and in which was stored the entire stock of drugs in the island, and smashed the lot. I saved him from being killed by the irate miners, and then clapped him into irons.

On the morning I left the mining camp, Brown's irons were taken off; whereupon he flung himself flat on his face and refused to walk to the vessel, saying that, if I wanted him I could carry him. I appealed to the miners. "Drag this blighter to the *Siai* for me, I'm not going to struggle with him myself and I don't like having him taken prisoner by the native police." "Set the niggers on the ——," was their answer, "we won't touch him." In obedience to my order, the police dragged Brown—kicking, fighting, and swearing—some hundreds yards from the camp; then I had him set down. "Brown, will you come quietly?" I asked. "No, you ——," he answered. "Corporal, load your rifle," I said. The corporal loaded it. "Sit here and guard

that man, and blow his head off if he moves," came next. Brown looked rather disturbed; then I took the remainder of my men away, and instructed them in the manner in which the frogs' march is performed. Returning to Brown, I nodded my head at the men, and said, "Frogs' march!" In ten minutes he was praying for mercy and release; I gave him fifteen minutes of it, and then he walked with us like a pet lamb.

When we reached the *Siai*, he was put in the hold where there were a couple of native prisoners; afterwards he had the ineffable impudence to send in a report to Port Moresby, complaining about Moreton and myself having put him in with natives, and quoting in support of his complaint, the treatment he had received in English and Colonial gaols, where he had never been put with niggers! Brown only spent a week in Samarai gaol, for a vessel then left for the Mambare, and he begged Moreton to procure his release and let him go thither. "Better let him go," said Moreton, "he is only a nuisance here, and he can't have a worse time than sweating for gold on the Mambare. We can let Armit know what he is like, and there are enough hard cases among the Mambare diggers to make things hot for him, if he plays any tricks there." "All right," I said, "let him go; I don't care where he is so long as he is out of my Division; but you and I will have to go bail for him." We released Brown, signed bail, and escorted him upon the vessel bound for the Mambare, where he was afterwards murdered by a boy he had brutally misused. His reputation was so bad on that gold-field, that white men, conversant with all the facts of the murder, declined to give evidence against the boy.

At the Woodlark Island gold-field, at that time, a very peculiar position existed. The Mining Act,

SOME EXPERIENCES OF

under which I worked, was an Act adopted from Queensland, where all lands not alienated were vested in the Crown; certificates of titles, rights or leases in Queensland being granted upon that assumption. In New Guinea, however, under our constitution, all lands not purchased by Government, not gazetted as waste and vacant, were held to belong to the natives; no land in Woodlark had been purchased by the Crown, nor had any been taken over as waste or vacant. The position therefore was, that on behalf of the Crown, I was granting titles to land to which the Crown itself held no title. As a matter of fact, I believe that if the natives had had sufficient knowledge, they could have capsized the title held by every miner and mining company in Woodlark, and could have entered into possession of all the claims or mines; moreover, they could do so still, unless those lands have subsequently been acquired by the Crown.

There was at that time no Government Officer stationed on Woodlark Island, and, before we left, I received a petition from the miners, praying that the headquarters of the Division should be moved to that island. This petition had my entire sympathy. It was utterly absurd that an island carrying two hundred European inhabitants, and some hundreds of natives, should be passed over in favour of a tiny islet, the population of which consisted solely of Government servants. I put in a recommendation to this effect, which was referred to Campbell on his return and pooh-poohed. Later, however, the Government was compelled to adopt my recommendation, and transfer the Station from Nivani to Woodlark.

From Woodlark, Moreton and I sailed for Ferguson, Trobriand, and Goodenough Islands; then—having completed certain police work—we returned to Samarai. From thence I took the *Murua* (her bottom now

A NEW GUINEA RESIDENT MAGISTRATE

having been repaired) to Nivani, there to complete refitting. Hardly had I got her fit for sea again, when the *Merrie England* appeared, bringing the new Lieutenant-Governor, Sir George Le Hunte, also the R.M., Campbell, back from leave.

CHAPTER XV

THE new Governor was a man as different from Sir William MacGregor as chalk from cheese. Mr. Le Hunte (as he was then) was a pleasant, genial Irishman; greeting each one of his officers, as if he were the very man he most wanted to see; ever being painfully anxious to avoid hurting anyone's feelings or being obliged to censure them. He certainly was a man who inspired great liking and affection in his subordinates; but he would sooner cajole a slack man into doing his work by increasing his pay or easing his duties, than spur him on with a caustic reprimand or a little additional work.

The Governor brought with him Captain Barton, late West India Regiment, and the Honble. C. G. Murray, as private secretary and assistant private secretary respectively—the latter without pay. One of these men, at the present time of writing, is First Minister to the Sultan of Zanzibar, and the other, Administrator of St. Vincent; whilst in New Guinea they each received appointments in the Service.

At Nivani, after I had handed over the Station to Campbell, the Governor desired me to accompany his party in the *Merrie England*, on her round voyage of inspection among the islands, and back to Port Moresby, where another appointment would be found for me. Devoutly hoping that the new billet would not have anything to do with Customs or Treasury, or be in the Gulf of Papua, I thankfully accepted the offer, and promptly attached myself to Judge Winter as unpaid

sociate. The *Merrie England* visited Sudest, St. Ignan, Rossel, and Woodlark Islands, where nothing of interest or moment took place; from thence she went to the Trobriands.

Here the Governor decided that he would walk across the island, through old Enamakala's village; the track was good and the country flat all the way, the journey could very easily be accomplished in two days. Sir George and his staff, being new to the country and utterly ignorant of local conditions, consulted me as to the method of procedure. A little fiction occurred at the beginning of this journey: for I found that, from something that Moreton had told him, his Excellency thought it inadvisable to carry arms or to take more than a few police. The Commandant and the travelling patrol were accordingly to be sent round the island in the *Merrie England*, to await us on the other side; the shore party was to consist of the Governor, the Judge, Barton, Murray, and myself, with the Governor's boat's crew and a score of local carriers. I, of course, had now no police of my own. Finding what the arrangements were to be, I went to my cabin, buckled on my revolver, and borrowed a Winchester rifle from the Chief Officer of the *Merrie England*. Then I went to Captain Barton, and unbosomed myself in this way. "We have already learnt in New Guinea the folly of proceedings such as this: you might walk unharmed across the island a score of times, and nothing happen; or you might be attacked the very first time, and wiped out."

Captain Barton and I then went together to the Governor, who was talking to Judge Winter, and Barton told him about my protest. "I have been assured by Mr. Moreton, that he walked across the island with nothing but his walking stick," said his Excellency. I groaned. "Moreton has been guilty of that folly,

sir; but Moreton is known to the people, and what he can do another cannot; also he only risked his own life, and not the lives of the Governor and the Chief Justice." "You really think it unsafe to cross unarmed, Monckton?" asked Judge Winter. "If we do it, sir, I consider that we shall incur an unnecessary and very grave risk," I replied. The Judge turned round, walked to his cabin, and returned wearing a heavy revolver at his belt. The Governor turned his shoulder to me pettishly; but when we got into the boats, I noticed that both Barton and Murray were wearing their revolvers. As soon as we got on shore, Barton told me to take command of the police. "Then first detail two men to keep the Governor in sight all the time," I said. Mr. Le Hunte carried a butterfly net, was a very slow walker, and kept perpetually crashing off into the scrub in pursuit of butterflies.

We halted for lunch in a village: the chiefs were presented to the Governor, a large crowd of natives assembled, and the personal servants of the Governor, the Judge and Murray, began trading with them for curios and betel-nut. Suddenly, there arose an angry clamour among the local natives, and we heard the voice of the Governor raised in anger. I yelled to the police to stand to their arms, and—with Barton—rushed off to Mr. Le Hunte, whose orderly we found holding a native by the arm, whilst a large number of others chattered angrily. It appeared that the Governor's boy had paid a native for a large bunch of betel-nut, the native had then tried to bolt with both betel-nut and payment; the boy complained to Mr. Le Hunte, who promptly commanded his orderly to seize the man and demand return of either the betel-nut or the payment—hence the row. The affair was soon arranged. "Well, sir," I whispered to Judge

Winter, "you see how easily friction can arise, out of nothing; what sort of fools should we have looked, ten minutes ago, without our revolvers?" "His Excellency seems to be very impulsive," remarked the Judge. Sir George Le Hunte (as he afterwards became) certainly was very impulsive, and it was made worse by an entire lack of fear of consequences. I remember once, at a later period, visiting a village on the Fly River with him, and getting a bad fright, through that same trait in his character.

I was returning from leave, and joined the *Merrie England* at Thursday Island. Barton was then Commandant, and there had been a fuss on the Fly River, brought about in this way. A native Mission teacher had gone up the river to an enormous Dobu, *i.e.* a huge tribal house, divided by partitions into family quarters, meeting halls, etc., in which there was a sacred place, where the natives kept some sort of god. The fool of a Mission teacher had torn down their god, and had just managed to escape, but it was in the midst of a storm of arrows. He then complained to another fool—a Government officer—who proceeded to the spot and burned down the Dobu; destroying not only the building that sheltered about five hundred people, but also the whole of their personal belongings and property with it. The homeless natives, suffering under a sense of injustice, became as venomous as a lot of scorched snakes. Sir George dismissed the officer responsible, and was proceeding there to restore friendly relations, and to compensate the natives for their loss.

The site of the Dobu was in a narrow mangrove-fringed creek, running into the Fly River, and afforded excellent cover for archers. Barton and myself were in the constabulary boat, which was filled with keen-eyed men, who were prepared to fight at a moment's

notice. Sir George was in his own gig, manned only by her crew, who of course all had their backs towards the direction in which they were going, and who would have had to drop their oars in order to seize their rifles. The proper course, and the course adopted by us—with the Governor's consent—was, that the fighting boat should be in advance. Imagine, therefore, our disgust and dismay when, just as we were well within comfortable arrow range of the mangroves ahead, Sir George suddenly stood up, and commanded us to fall to the rear. "What shall I do?" said Barton. "Don't hear him," I said; "if he is killed, we shall be blamed." A very angry and imperative bellow now came from behind us, to which Barton was forced to pay attention, and very reluctantly we dropped to the rear. By a lucky chance the natives did not see us coming, so we were able to land before being discovered by them and then to make peaceful overtures; but a more unreasonable, impulsive, and dangerous action than that of Sir George I have never known; for he not only exposed his own bulky form to the risk of arrows, but the backs also of his defenceless crew, and our crowded boat as well; since we should not have been able to come into action, for fear of killing him.

Sir George Le Hunte was a most kindly man and, as a rule, very considerate to his officers; but these impulsive actions of his were absolutely damnable. If he had been killed (as well he might have been), how could his officers have explained why the Governor, with a helpless crew, came to be in the position of danger? He would not have been there to exculpate us, and the result would have been that we—for the remainder of our lives—would have suffered under the stigma of leaving him in the lurch.

We completed our journey across the island without

any further incident worthy of note, old Enamakala being very friendly. Then we sailed for Goodenough Island; there, Satadeai collected some natives, and gave an eye-opening exhibition of sling-stone throwing. "I never before realized what a poor chance Goliath had against David," remarked Judge Winter, after he had watched the slingmen for a few minutes. At Wedau, on the north-east coast, the Governor and Judge went up to the Mission Station, while Barton, Murray and I went shooting: as I noticed the state of the tide in the streams the idea occurred to me that my friends might like to witness a peculiar method of catching fish. "Would you like to see a fishing even stranger than the Dobu kite fishers?" I asked. They would most certainly: so I took them to the mouth of a small stream, where a row of four or five women stood in it, holding shallow scoop nets in their hands and attentively watching the water. Presently, first one and then another in succession leant forward and milked her breasts into the water; then very carefully and quietly she inserted her net under the surface, and brought it up full of tiny little fish; after which she emptied her basket, and resumed her watch.

"Ugh! disgusting!" said Murray. "No doubt," I replied; "but you will see more disgusting things than that before you leave. Why, one of those very women and her daughter dug up a corpse and ate it, because they wanted to be with child; some sorcerer or witch having told them that it was the best way to ensure it." "What happened then?" asked the shuddering Murray. "Judge Winter gave them six months for desecrating a sepulchre; there is no law against cannibalism," I told him. Native traditions on the north-east coast tells how a fearful epidemic swept through the island many years ago; it must undoubtedly have been smallpox, as several old men still showed pitted

faces caused by the disease. It was followed by a year of famine, during which the women exchanged their children with each other for culinary purposes, and every one went in fear of being knocked on the head and eaten by his neighbour. The people from East Cape to Bartle Bay are a miserable, decadent lot.

A great portion of the coast is hilly grass land, carrying excellent pasture for cattle, but containing also a nasty spear-grass, the seed of which will work its barbed way through one's clothes, and in the case of sheep right into the carcase. The Bishop of New Guinea once bought a flock of sheep intending to breed from them, and turned them out on the hills. I came along some months later, and noticed the sheep wanted shearing very badly. Bishop Stone-Wigg then told me that he had got shears, but no one in the Mission knew how to shear; so accordingly I volunteered to do it. The police rounded up and caught the sheep, and I set to work. I made two discoveries: one was that the breeding flock consisted mainly of wethers, the other, that their skins and flesh were literally stuck full of spear-grass seed, the skins feeling like a very worn-out horse-hair sofa. When I had concluded my shearing operations, I went to the Mission house, where I found that the natives, who had been lost in amazement at the performance, had sent to ask the Bishop, "What the poor sheep had done, to cause the magistrate and police to cut off all their hair?"

From Wedau, the *Merrie England* went on to Samarai, and thence to Port Moresby.

Upon our arrival at Port Moresby, I accompanied the Governor to Government House, there to await an appointment; in the meantime I assisted Barton in engaging native servants, and also in other things which were strange to a new-comer. There was at that time

a European market gardener, named Weaver, living alone some miles out of Port Moresby (he was, by the way, afterwards murdered). He was remarkable for two things: the moroseness of his temper, and the size of his feet. He got his boots by special order through Burns, Philp and Co.; and on one occasion, the boot-maker to whom the size was sent, forwarded children's boots, thinking that it could not possibly mean size thirteen in men's boots. Weaver came in with a horse-load of vegetables, and went to Burns, Philp for his boots, where he was given the parcel containing the children's boots. When he had opened it and had seen what it contained, he nearly went mad—thinking a joke had been played upon him. At last, after he had half wrecked the store and frightened the unfortunate clerks into fits, he was made to understand that there were no other boots for him; he then seized his horse and brought it over to Government House, where I began to buy his vegetables.

While so engaged, Murray came out and said "good-morning" to Weaver, a salutation that was received with a glare and a grunt. Then Murray—who still possessed the finicking airs and graces of the exquisite of the Bachelors' Club—took out a dainty little cigarette case, and proffered a cigarette to the clay pipe and strongest of tobacco smoking Weaver. Weaver thought it was another insult of the small boot variety, and before his stream of lurid blasphemy, Murray fled indoors. I soothed him, and went on buying cabbages. Out then came the Governor, asked me who Weaver was, and in his genial way shook his hand and asked after his health. "Another blanker!" groaned Weaver. "None the blanky better for your asking," said that courteous person; and his Excellency fled. "There appear to be some very peculiar people in this country, Monckton," remarked the Governor at breakfast.

"Very true," I said, "and when you, sir, have completed your term of service here, you will think, as I do, that the whole country is a weird compound of comic opera and tragedy, with a very narrow margin between them. I have been buying cabbages for you this morning; Heaven only knows where you will send me, or what I shall be doing next week."

When we first arrived in Port Moresby, we found that Ballantine was away in the hills with a relief expedition for H. Stuart-Russell, who had been sent to survey a road over the Owen Stanley Range to the Yodda valley gold-field in the north-east; a gold-field that, at the time, could only be reached by ascending the Kumusi River to Bogi, and then doing a ten days' march inland. Stuart-Russell had sent out word that he was in hostile country, and had run out of supplies.

One morning, the Governor called me to his room and said, "Ballantine has returned, having failed to connect with Russell: I am getting very anxious about him, and intend to dispatch another relief expedition with you in command. The Government Secretary has been instructed to make all arrangements, and you should be able to leave to-morrow morning: here are your minutes of instructions." I glanced at my orders, and my heart sank: first of all, Muzzy to organize the expedition: as well have a well-meaning hen-wife; then, when I did find Russell, I was to place myself under his orders; Russell, whom I knew to be a surveyor, and ignorant of anything else. Wending my way to the Commandant, I worried him about the personnel of the constabulary I was to take, and at last got him to include Keke and Ade in the lot; he had been detailing for me all the rotters and recruits in barracks. My next interview was with Mr. Musgrave, who I found had provided a most elaborate equipment of stores, etc.—a collection that would take about six

ndred men to carry—and had engaged the Hanuabada natives and a mule team to carry it to the Laloki river, which was about seven miles distant.

The Hanuabada (Port Moresby) carriers were the most pampered lot of lying, lazy loafers in New Guinea; they were to receive in pay one shilling per day, the ordinary Government pay was twopence, and a heavy ration of rice, meat, biscuit, tea, sugar, etc.; as well as to be equipped with blankets, tents, cooking utensils, and all the rest of it, for this one night's camp at the Laloki; and this, too, on a warm tropical night. When I looked into the arrangements made by Muzzy, I felt inclined to sit down and cry. First, I had the awful Hanuabadas as far as the Laloki; then in some mysterious way I was supposed to transport my stores to the Brown River—Heaven only knows how. Muzzy, however, suggested I should bribe the Hanuabadas, by double pay, to go on there; then, I was to pick up Russell's time-expired and worn-out carriers and "induce" them to return with me to the Main Range. Muzzy had had a flat-bottomed, square-ended, bull-nosed brute of a punt built, and placed upon the Brown River: a thing calculated by him to carry about five tons, which I was instructed to take to the head of the Brown; this was by him fondly supposed to solve the transport difficulties.

"Look here, sir," I said to Mr. Musgrave, once I had grasped the full beauty of his arrangements. "I understand speed is the very essence of this expedition. Let me chuck all arrangements at present made; give me twenty constabulary, forty fresh and strong carriers, allow me to spend twenty pounds in meat extract, pea flour and cocoa, and follow my own road; then I will guarantee to fetch Russell out in a fortnight." "Mr. Monckton," said the Government Secretary, "Mr. Chester, Mr. Giulianetti and I, have given a great deal

of thought to this expedition, and our arrangements are perfect; you are to carry them out." I did not dare tell Muzzy what I thought about it all. "Supposing, Mr. Musgrave," I said, "Russell's carriers refuse to return with me, or that they are sick and exhausted, what am I to do?" "I have made the most elaborate arrangements," said Muzzy, "it is for you to carry them out."

Accordingly I sought out the driver of the mule team, and led him to the pub; after I had loaded him up with whisky, I asked, "Could you get that team of yours on as far as the Brown River?" "Yes," was the reply. "Could you and the team work for twenty-four hours at a stretch, if necessary?" "Yes, if it's made worth my while, and the mules are fed," he said. I then saw my way out of the difficulty of getting from the Laloki River to the Brown; accordingly I told the driver I would give him half my month's pay, and steal the Hanuabadas' rice for his mules. "Put it there," he said, spitting on his hand and holding it out for me to shake. "I won't take your pay, it's poor enough; take a bottle or two of rum with you, and I will work my blanky mules until their eye-balls start from their heads and play marbles along their back-bones."

In the early morning, accordingly, I made my start; and half a mile from Port Moresby abandoned the biscuits, blankets and sugar of the Hanuabadas. From the Laloki, the carriers returned to Port, and I went on to the Brown River accompanied by my police and the mule team: there I at once stationed a picket to catch Russell's returning carriers, who were drifting down in threes, fives, and tens. The police and I then loaded the punt with stores, ready for the ascent of the river, which is a rapid mountain stream, full of whirlpools, rocks, snags, and rapids. From here, I

sent back the mules to bring up another load of stores, and sat down to await their return. One day passed, two days passed, still no sign of the mules; I sent some police off in search of them, and then—with such carriers as had by now come down from Russell's party—I began to haul that infernal punt up the river. The punt at once started to go to pieces: it was built of the heaviest timber, fastened together with trumpery flimsy wire nails; the planking of the bottom, instead of running lengthways, ran across, and therefore, whenever we began to haul her over a rapid, the edges caught on the sharp rocks of the bottom and opened up—making the thing leak like a basket. A ring had been fixed on one end, with a rope tied on it for hauling on; this ring was attached to a plate fastened by two one-inch screws, which were fondly supposed, by its architect, to withstand the strain of large numbers of men hauling a dead weight of five tons up a rapid. After one hour's experience of this ark, we dragged it ashore, plaited vines all round it to keep it together, caulked it with strips of blanket, and made a rope cradle all round to haul on. Then we went on again.

The carriers I was now using, were men recruited from Mekeo; their time had expired, and they were keenly anxious to return to their homes. It was only by a vigorous use of cleaning rod that we could "induce" them to work, and we had to keep them under perpetual guard, lest they should desert; also they could not swim, so that when we came to a deep crossing we had to haul them through on a rope, and, in addition, forcibly tie them to the rope, as the procedure was not one they relished. Mile by mile we fought our way up that awful river; the constabulary and I stripped naked, hauling, sweating, swimming, and swearing, until at last we came to a whirlpool under a rapid. The police were swimming alongside

the punt, the carriers hauling on the rope, I was steering the ark by a rough paddle, when suddenly a swirl of the current carried her into the whirlpool. I yelled at the carriers to slack the rope, but they lost their heads and pulled harder: punt, stores and I, accordingly disappeared into the swirl, and then those mutton-headed carriers let go the rope altogether. I am a bad swimmer at the best, and was about done in the swirl: the police were doing their best to stem the current and get to me. At last Keke managed to crawl out on a bank and, running along, dived from a rock, caught me round the waist as he swept past, and carried me to a sharp-edged rock, upon which he tore his feet badly in climbing out. I lay on a rock, and coughed up about half the Brown River. Rifles, stores, clothes, all were gone; mother-naked stood the constabulary and I, with the exception of one flannel police shirt which had washed ashore, and which I promptly annexed. Nothing now remained for us but to return to our first camp, get fresh stores, and start again.

A melancholy procession returned to that camp, even my shirt failing to add dignity to our march. I then heard that the mule driver had contrived to let his mules stray on the night of his departure, and was still engaged in hunting for them. I sent a letter to Captain Barton, conveying a blistering curse concerning all punts, and asses who drove mules; and asked him to forward me some fresh rifles and clothing for the police, as well as some clothes and boots for myself. Whilst awaiting their arrival, I met with a fresh misfortune; for in moving about the camp, I jumped with my bare foot upon a rusty nail, fixed in a piece of board belonging to an old meat case left by Russell, and ran it clean through my foot. I feared tetanus; but hunting in a medicine chest at the camp, I found sticks of lunar

caustic, and decided to cauterize the wound with it. Calling Keke, I showed him how to poke a probe through the puncture; and when he apparently understood, I took a small piece of caustic and shoved it into the hole. "Now then, Keke, shove it through," I said, as I lay on my stomach and elevated the sole of my foot in the air. Keke gave a gentle push, and then—as I gave a howl—stopped, the stuff burning like hell-fire. "Shove it through, you blank, blank idiot!" I yelled. "Oh, master, I hurt you too much, I am frightened," said Keke. My howls, however, attracted Ade, who, grasping the situation and my foot at the same time, rammed the caustic through with the probe. "Keke," I remarked, as I cooled my injured foot in a bucket of water, "if you had not hauled me out of the river, I'd break your thick head." "I am a lance-corporal, not a doctor," said that injured individual; "if there is any more of this, Ade can be doctor."

A few days later my rifles and clothes arrived, also the missing mules; again we took that awful punt up the river, this time successfully, though the amount of labour we expended upon it would have transported the stores three times over.

The day after we quitted the river to strike over the mountains, Lario, a Malay, who had been in charge of a log for Russell higher up, came in with a large number of time-expired and more or less worn-out carriers. Howls of dismay went up from these unfortunate natives when they learnt that they were to turn round and go back with me. Much "moral" suasion had to be used by the police before they would "volunteer"; some did succeed in sneaking away and making a bolt for the coast, but our watch was so strict that few of the volunteers escaped. Lario was a splendid chap, loyal, brave, and full of resource; and I was more than

pleased when he, though time-expired, consented to turn round and accompany me as second in command. I went carefully through all the carriers with Lario, in order to cast out—for return to the coast—all those who were unfit for service: very, very sorry I felt for the poor wretches (though I did not dare show it), as man by man they were examined; some happy ones being cast for return, to the open envy of their companions. They were all Mission boys from the Mekeo district, flat-country men, non-swimming, and singularly ill-adapted for the work in which they were engaged. That night—through Lario—they asked my permission to hold a prayer meeting; afterwards Lario told me that they prayed that the hearts of myself, Lario and the police, would be softened towards them.

Day after day of climbing over awful country passed, we following a line cut or blazed through the bush by Russell; at intervals we came to log huts or forts, containing a couple of police and a few carriers: these I added to the expedition, both for purposes of speed and also in order to bring the biggest possible force to Russell. On one occasion, while following the blazed line along the top of a razor-backed spur, we came to where it narrowed to a crumbling knife-edged track, with a sheer drop on one side, looking down upon clouds, and on the other, the dull murmur of a river could be heard a thousand feet below. I am a fearful man, and I hate heights; my head always whirls on them, and my muscles become as flaccid as those of a pampered lap-dog. I gazed at that spot, and then said to Lario, "Surely Mr. Russell is not a tight-rope walker, or fool enough to go over there." "I don't know," said Lario; "the blazes lead to it, but I've not been here before." The carriers swore that Russell had not been that way, but I did not believe them, as

they were always full of reasons why we should turn back. As for the police, so long as I went over, they would follow—even into the remotest pit. The men, were the old New Guinea constabulary.

"It is no good looking at it, Lario," I said at last. "I am half paralysed with funk, but here goes!" Then, afraid to look down, I walked as far as I could with the cold sweat of fear streaming from me. Then I sat, straddled that fearsome spur with my legs and slowly—leap-frog fashion—began to work my way across the thirty feet of the worst part, the stones and dirt I dislodged falling so far that their impact sent no sound. Half-way across, my thin cotton breeches began to tear badly with the stones: as I went, I suddenly felt as if ten thousand red-hot pinners were tearing at the portion of my anatomy exposed by the torn garments; I stood the agony for a second, then—unable to bear it any longer—leapt to my feet, and ran like a tight-rope walker across that narrow crumbling ridge. Reaching safety and a wider part of the spur, I sat down and tore a score of bull-dog ants from my skin; I had worked my way clean over a nest of the malignant little beasts. Then I turned and looked at Lario; his teeth were chattering and his knees knocking together. "Oh, my God, sir," he wailed, "you did frighten me." "Come on, Lario," I replied; "if I spend the remainder of my life in the mountains, nothing will take me over that place again." Lario set his teeth, walked as far as I had done, then sat down and started my leap-frog method of progression: suddenly he stopped, his eyes bulged, and he jumped to his feet and ran to where I was standing, when he began to tear those infernal little pests from his person. Curiously enough, though the carriers were flat-footed men, they did not mind heights nor did they suffer from vertigo; and after one of the police had walked out.

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swept the ants into eternity with a leafy branch, they marched steadily across.

When I met Russell afterwards, I asked him what on earth took him over such a place, and how he expected it ever to become a road across the island. Then I found that he had not crossed it; he had cut his line up to the bad spot, then, retracing his steps some miles, had found a good road down a side spur, which we had missed, and had ascended again further on. There are many sorts of funk: some men fear sickness, some fighting, some spooks, some drowning, and some cats; every man has his own particular abhorrence; but the worst kind of helpless fear is the sort I suffer from—fear of a height.

At last our journey ended. One afternoon we marched into a large clearing, in which stood a log hut, surrounded by a ring of natives camped at a safe distance from Russell's men in the hut, but closely investing it; it was the last post Russell had placed, before disappearing across to the Yodda. We soon swept away the surrounding natives, who had been patiently waiting until the men in the hut were starved into the open. As the rattle of our rifle fire died away, in marched Russell from the other side, covered on his rear by a wide-flung patrol of mine. Russell had been having a very rough time: he had by degrees broken up his force, leaving them in log huts to guard his line of communication, in order to ensure the safety of his sick and returning carriers; eventually he and Macdonald (head gaoler) had penetrated into the Yodda, so weak in force that they were easily driven out by hostile natives. When I came up, he was falling back upon a weak camp surrounded by hordes of savages; his stores were exhausted, and most of his ammunition spent. Replenished with fresh police, stores and ammunition, I left him, taking with

me all the sick and exhausted carriers and worn-out police back to Port Moresby. Russell remained for a week, to complete some survey work. I took my sick by easy stages, and at the Laloki camped for three days; spending the time in shooting game of all sorts, and gorging my charges on meat, until they were a happy and contented lot of men.

A lagoon at the Laloki which simply teemed with duck, was also inhabited by an enormous alligator, which had recently seized a Government horse by the nose, while drinking, and dragged it off. The Government offered a reward of five pounds for the destruction of the reptile. Whilst I was camped there, the lagoon happened to be very low: Lario was engaged stalking a flock of ducks, when he came suddenly upon the alligator; it opened its mouth, and he promptly emptied both barrels of his gun down its throat, whereupon it rushed into the lagoon. Lario yelled his discovery to the camp, and police, carriers and I rushed down; we could locate the beast on the bottom in three or four feet of water and about thirty feet distant from the bank, by the bubbles and discolouration caused by the reptile's uneasy movements. "Oh, for some dynamite!" I sighed; but dynamite there was none. The police, however, and a large number of carriers, rose to the occasion: cutting poles about nine feet long, they sharpened them at the end, waded out and formed a semicircle on the far side of the alligator. Then cautiously walking up to the bubbles, half a dozen men struck suddenly and savagely at the spot; the immediate response was the appearance of a head and pair of snapping jaws. I promptly sent a Snider bullet through the head, and it disappeared again, while the men crowded together watching keenly the track of the bubbles. Once more they stirred up the beast, whilst I shot him again; half a dozen Snider

bullets I must have put into various parts of its anatomy before it apparently gave up the ghost and remained quiescent under the stabs of the police. Then a man stood on the carcase, whilst others went to cut vines with which to haul it ashore. There still, however, was a remaining flicker of life in the beast; for the standing man gave a yell of fright and vanished under water, as the alligator rolled over on its side, dead at last.

The beast having been hauled ashore, I was surprised to find embedded in its skull, six inches of the point of a heavy spear, which had rotted, and round which the bone had grown. The carriers ate the brute: by New Guinea hunting custom, however, the carcase—or in this case the reward—belonged to the man who had inflicted the first wound, or “first spear” as it is called, no matter how many men might have taken part in the actual killing. Lario did not get the reward, though I told him to apply to the Treasury, and afterwards had a fuss with Ballantine about it, as Ballantine held that he was a Government servant and killed the alligator in the course of his duty. Stories about the toughness of an alligator’s hide are all bosh. A bullet from a common fowling piece will penetrate them anywhere; but they are wonderfully tenacious of life, and, however badly hit, usually manage to wriggle into deep water. I have never seen one killed instantly by a single shot, though doubtless the reptile would afterwards die from the effects of it.

I left that abominable punt at the head of the Brown River, never wanting to see the beast again. Russell and Macdonald, on their return journey, tried to descend the river in it, and lost all their personal effects as well as being half drowned, whereupon they abandoned the thing. Later, Mr. Musgrave, who had an affection for the child of his brain, wanted it recovered

for future use; but Sir George Le Hunte said, that as it had already nearly cost the lives of two of his officers and the head gaoler, he thought it was better left where it was.

Upon my return to Port Moresby and having reported myself to the Acting Administrator, Sir Francis Winter, I was told that the Government Secretary had a minute from the Governor for me; Sir George was away in Brisbane at the time. I went to Mr. Musgrave, and was handed a minute to this effect. "Certain deserting carriers from the Russell relief expedition have complained about being beaten with sticks by Mr. Monckton and his police. Mr. Monckton to report." "Well, I'm damned!" I thought, "the whole of this expedition has been a mess and a muddle from the beginning; a scapegoat is wanted, and I'm to fill that rôle!" Then in a fury of rage I went for Muzzy. "I told you from the beginning, sir, that the relief expedition was badly arranged; I begged you to give me twenty constabulary, forty good carriers, and to let me go my own way. Instead of which, I was compelled to carry out the most asinine arrangements, and to 'induce' a lot of disgusted and worn-out carriers to do work for which they were utterly unfitted. Hold your inquiry. I myself never hit a carrier; and the police certainly did not hit the beggars with sticks when they tried to bolt, they used steel cleaning rods." Muzzy held up his hand. "Mr. Monckton, will you be quiet? You say you did not hit any man with a stick?" "Yes, sir," was my answer. "And also that your police did not hit them with sticks?" "They did not," I said, "they had no time to cut sticks; they hit the carriers, when they gave trouble, with their cleaning rods." "I don't want to know anything about that," said Muzzy. "You deny absolutely that any carrier was beaten,

either by yourself or your police, with *sticks*?" "Yes, sir, I do," was my reply. "Call up the carriers I have brought back, and ask them whether they are not contented men." Muzzy called up my meat-gorged men, who were then pleasantly anticipating their pay; of course they swore that I and my police were the best of good people. I then thanked my stars that on the way back I had stopped and hunted to fill the bellies of those carriers, otherwise a different tale would have been told.

Later, when I knew the complete details of Russell's expedition and of Ballantine's failure to relieve him, I learnt that the whole muddle was really due to Russell, having disobeyed orders, thereby throwing out all arrangements. Sir George Le Hunte had directed him to proceed to the summit of the Owen Stanley Range, but no further. Russell, however, being a keen hydrographer, had, at the imminent risk of his own and his men's lives, descended upon the opposite side, and got into difficulties; the magnificent work he did saved him from censure or blame; but, as a matter of fact, he richly deserved the sack for attempting it. Russell afterwards showed me a letter from Sir George Le Hunte which began, "You dear disobedient person, I should be very angry with you, but instead, I can only feel pleased." I made but one remark to Russell, and that was, "You thank your stars you are dealing with Sir George instead of Sir William MacGregor: for if you had disobeyed him, you would have had something to remember!"

I then received a note from Captain Barton asking me to take up my quarters at Government House, until the return of the Governor from Australia; he also told me that it had been decided by Council that the untouched part of the north-east coast of New Guinea was to be taken in hand, and that I was to be

sent there as the first Resident Magistrate. "You will be glad," naïvely remarked Captain Barton, "to have settled and permanent work."

Sir Francis Winter made me Assistant to Russell in the Survey Office, whilst awaiting the Governor's return: I spent my time drawing maps and copying plans, and I also began a feud with the Government Store that lasted during the whole period of my service in New Guinea. Russell wanted about half a dozen tin-tacks for something or other, so I sent an orderly down to the Government Store with a note, asking Chester to give them to him; the boy came back saying that he could not get them. I went myself to the Store, and found Chester suffering from a bad attack of liver. "What's the matter, Chester, why won't you give me the tacks?" "Go to blazes," said Chester, "and send me a proper requisition." "Surely you are not going to put me to all that trouble for the sixteenth part of a penny?" I asked. "I am," he said. I went back to the office and drew out a requisition for half a dozen tin-tacks, value one-sixteenth of a penny, and took it back again. "No good," said Chester, "requisition for supplies for the Survey Department must be countersigned by the Government Secretary." I said nothing, but wasted an hour in getting hold of the Government Secretary, who was engaged when I wanted him. "What tomfoolery is this, Mr. Monckton?" said Muzzy, as he glared at my requisition. "What do you mean by wasting my time like this?" "Chester has a liver and is full of red tape this morning; he won't give me the tacks without a formal requisition," I replied. Muzzy dashed his signature at the foot, and off I went again and handed the requisition to Chester without a word, though inwardly I was seething. "No good," said Chester, "this requisition should have been signed by

the head of the department requisitioning, not by you; Russell must sign it." I took it back without a word, and went to Russell. "You are a damned fine assistant," remarked that impatient individual; "do you want the whole day to get me half-a dozen tin-tacks?" In lurid language I explained to him what had taken place, and Ballantine, hearing the fuss, came in and laughed at me. Russell signed the requisition, which I took, and went off again. Ballantine, who was chuckling to himself at some obscure joke, then said he would walk down to the Government Store with me to see the end of it.

Arrived there, I chucked the requisition at Chester with, "Now you attend to that at once, you blighter." Chester took it, and Ballantine led him on one side and whispered to him. "I can't accept this requisition," said Chester. "Why?" I asked, hardly trusting myself to speak. "Because there is a Treasury Regulation that once the Government Secretary's signature has been attached to a requisition, no addition or alteration shall be made without his previous approval. Russell's signature is an addition." Ballantine rolled over screaming with laughter. Again I took the requisition to Muzzy, and in a cold hard voice explained the position to him. He looked at my face, said not a word, and confirmed the alteration. Back I went to the Government Store, and again handed Chester the requisition, Ballantine still being there. "I can't fulfil this," said Chester. Boiling with indignation, I blurted out, "Why, you blank blank scrim-shanker? If you fool me any more, I'm going to the Administrator." "Oh, go to him," said Chester, "but if you use that language here, I'll send for the police." Off I bolted to Sir Francis; he listened to my heated complaint with his usual quiet smile, looked at the requisition and smiled again, then wrote across the form, "Govern-

ment storekeeper, fulfil this requisition at once, F.P.W., Administrator." Back again I went to Chester. "Now, my beauty, you trot out my tin-tacks, unless you want to face an inquiry for disobeying orders." Chester took the form and wrote across it, "Tin-tacks not in stock in Government Store." Fortunately I was struck speechless, and before I recovered, Ballantine seized me by the arm and said, "Come along to lunch with me, Monckton; His Honour is coming, and I'm certain he will be pleased to hear the end of this." As we went off to lunch, we met Russell, "when you have finished gallivanting about, and amusing yourself, you won't mind returning to your duties." "Blank! Blank! Blank!" "Hush! Hush! Monckton," said Ballantine; "Russell for the time being is your superior officer."

In due course Sir George Le Hunte returned; and I was promptly appointed to the new North-Eastern Division, being, however, given three months' leave of absence before I took up my new duties. Naturally I decided to spend my three months away from New Guinea; I therefore arranged with Ballantine that he should send me out in his Custom's boat to a steamer, that was to call off the Port with a mail, in the course of a few days.

Captain Fielden, who had been on Lord Hampden's staff in Australia, and had been persuaded by Murray to come back with Sir George for a holiday, took it into his head to come and see me off. The day and the ship arrived: I started off in the Custom's boat, in the face of a strong south-easter the boat shipped a lot of water, and Fielden complained about it. "Bail out the water," I said to the coxswain, who was a smooth-water sailor. That worthy promptly pulled the plug out of the bottom of the boat, in order to let the water run out. I did not notice what he was doing,

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until the boat was half full, and then the plug was lost. Accordingly, we completed our journey with a man sitting in the bottom holding his thumb in the hole, Fielden protesting all the time that we ought to turn back. I knew better, however; for I felt convinced that if I missed that steamer and returned, something would turn up to find a new job for me, and therefore cost me my leave. I have not seen Fielden again from that day to this; but when I returned from leave, Ballantine told me he had growled that I had done my best to drown him and a boat's crew.

On my return I took up my new appointment in the North-Eastern Division, and my experiences there are recorded in *Some Experiences of a New Guinea Resident Magistrate: Second Series.*

END OF FIRST VOLUME.

